



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 18 November 2015

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Scottish Parliament

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[The Deputy Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:00]

Portfolio Question Time

Health, Wellbeing and Sport

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): Good afternoon, everyone. The first item of business is portfolio question time. To get as many questions and answers in as possible, I would be grateful if they were as brief as possible.

Queen Elizabeth University Hospital (Accident and Emergency Performance)

1. Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport's position is on the performance of the accident and emergency department at Queen Elizabeth university hospital, Glasgow. (S4O-04795)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Despite improvements over the summer, the level of variation in performance at Queen Elizabeth university hospital's A and E is unacceptable. The national unscheduled care team continues to work closely with the local team on a number of improvement initiatives to ensure continuous improvement.

Figures that were published yesterday for the week ending 8 November show a 2.5 percentage point improvement on the figures for the previous week, to 88.6 per cent. The health board has suggested that performance in the latest week—the week ending 15 November—has significantly improved on performance in recent weeks, but progress continues towards the sustainable improvement that is required.

Jackson Carlaw: Regrettably, the performance of the Queen Elizabeth A and E has been a constant source of concern since that £842 million flagship hospital opened. Before the summer recess, two requests by me for a statement on the issue were declined. When Parliament returned in September, I was directed—when I had the temerity to raise the issue—to an answer that was given to Bob Doris.

Despite the hard work and efforts of staff, performance continues to be poor at Queen Elizabeth A and E. As I am sure the cabinet secretary knows, that was compounded by the inexcusable death of an elderly man who was left

languishing on a trolley. I say to her that my west of Scotland constituents, having been redirected to the Queen Elizabeth following the closure of the more easily reached Victoria infirmary, find themselves in a vastly superior facility but with an inferior service. They have heard the warm words.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can you come to the question, please?

Jackson Carlaw: Those words were added to this week by promises of the achievement of targets and improved services by the spring—I emphasise the spring. However, this summer's similar promises came to nothing. What my constituents want to know now is not that everything is being done but, specifically, what exactly is being done by both the health board and the cabinet secretary. Can she tell us?

Shona Robison: First, it is essential that the new flagship hospital, as Jackson Carlaw described it, performs well not just in its A and E department but across the hospital. I confirm that staff are working hard to achieve that and that the support team has continued its work. Of course, an answer was given about that team's work over the summer.

Jackson Carlaw mentioned the immediate assessment unit, which is not the same as the A and E department but is an important component of the new hospital. I deeply regret the death of the elderly gentleman on a trolley. That is unacceptable and a full review into his treatment has been initiated. It is very important that that happens.

I can say that further developments around the immediate assessment unit have been taken forward. As of this week, there is a new ambulatory care area that is capable of seeing 10 patients at a time and there is an alternative location for the assessment of surgical and neurology patients. I visited the assessment unit and the ambulatory service this morning, and I can tell Jackson Carlaw that staff are working hard to make the changes and that improvements from those changes are already visible.

I assure Jackson Carlaw and everyone else in the chamber that I take a daily interest in the issue because it is important that the hospital performs as it should. The staff need to be supported to deliver that.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I do not think that any of us doubts that the cabinet secretary is trying to be on top of this, and nor do we doubt that the staff are working hard. However, the continuing problem with the A and E unit indicates that it is underresourced: there is not enough space, staff or time to get patients through.

In addition, we now know that, under various names, there are 13 similar immediate assessment units across Scotland, which are not subject to the A and E waiting times. The public require a clear explanation of what is going on. Will the cabinet secretary provide a statement about what is actually going on? The Queen Elizabeth hospital's problems are no longer teething problems; they involve serious issues that might have long-term effects.

Shona Robison: Richard Simpson again conflated two things—the A and E unit and the immediate assessment unit. Let us talk about the immediate assessment unit. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has said clearly that that needs to be bigger than the modelling that was done suggested, so steps are being taken immediately to create the ambulatory care area and to make the other changes that I mentioned in order to free up capacity. The health board is also expanding the size of the unit, which it has been given until mid-December to do. It is doing that so that the unit is the size that is required. That is not about not having enough staff in A and E; it is about the immediate assessment unit not being big enough and not having the capacity. That is being acted on and will be changed.

Richard Simpson mentioned the units that, as he said, have grown up across Scotland in different ways over many years. He is right—they are not subject to the four-hour target. I hope that he is aware that the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh has begun work with the Scottish Government over the past few months on whether we can standardise those units and how we can ensure that performance is monitored and that patient safety is at the forefront of all that work. That work is on-going and, when it concludes, I will be more than happy to inform Parliament of that in whatever way makes the most sense.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: If we are going to get through the questions, we need short questions and answers, please.

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (Private Finance Initiative)

2. Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with NHS Lothian regarding the private finance initiative contract at the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh. (S4O-04796)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Scottish Government officials meet NHS Lothian staff regularly to discuss a range of finance and infrastructure topics. The management of the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh contract is NHS Lothian's responsibility; any particular issues relating to the contract can be discussed in that

forum. Since April, NHS Lothian has been working to develop and consider a range of options to improve the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh contract. Officials are supporting NHS Lothian in those efforts.

Jim Eadie: I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to work with NHS Lothian to improve the cost-effectiveness and transparency of a PFI contract that is widely believed to be against the public interest. I am aware that part of the process of identifying savings was the establishment of an expert review group at the hospital to carry out a full financial health check of the contract's current and retrospective performance. Will the cabinet secretary provide me with an update on that health check and whether any further savings have been identified for the benefit of the taxpayer?

Shona Robison: I am certainly aware of the member's concerns about—and interest in—the contract for the hospital. He can be assured that I share his concerns and that I support NHS Lothian's work to make those improvements. It has established a group to identify and examine a full range of options for the future management and operation of the PFI contract with the goal of improving value for money. It is being supported in that work by officials and by the Scottish Futures Trust.

The focus is on a long-term improvement in the performance and value for money of the services that are delivered through the PFI contract rather than simply achieving savings in the short term. NHS Lothian is actively investigating ways in which the contract might be improved and has strengthened the in-house management arrangements.

Proposals made by the group will be fully considered as regards affordability, value for money and the benefits that they will deliver. I am happy to keep the member informed about that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 3, in the name of Neil Bibby, has not been lodged. An explanation has been provided.

Breast Cancer Treatment (Availability of Drugs)

4. Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the drug, Afinitor, is not available on the national health service in Scotland for the treatment of breast cancer. (S4O-04798)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Medicines Consortium provides advice to NHS Scotland on newly licensed medicines. The independence of the Scottish Medicines

Consortium's decisions on individual drugs is well established.

The SMC did not recommend everolimus for breast cancer because of uncertainties surrounding the overall clinical benefit that the medicine would provide for patients taken against the price that is charged for the drug. As the member will be aware, the SMC is expecting a resubmission from the pharmaceutical company for the drug.

Cameron Buchanan: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. The matter is of great concern to my constituents, as they have to travel south to get certain treatments on the NHS, including Afinitor. Have any steps been taken to ensure that that does not need to happen?

Shona Robison: Sometimes different decisions on drug availability are made by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the SMC. Sometimes NICE does not approve drugs that are available in Scotland.

We base our decision making on what the SMC advises. I remind the member that we have a £90 million new medicines fund that has been established for the purpose of getting drugs for orphan and ultra-orphan conditions into patients' hands. Even when the SMC has not approved a drug for widespread use, there is still an opportunity for the patient to apply through the individual patient treatment pathway.

I remind the member that we are reviewing the SMC, and patients' views on such issues will be an important part of that process.

General Practitioner Services (Mid Scotland and Fife)

5. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure access to GP services in the Mid Scotland and Fife region. (S4O-04799)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Under the legal framework for service provision, national health service boards are responsible for ensuring the provision of primary medical services for their areas. NHS Fife works with general practitioner practices to ensure that everyone in Fife has access to GP services.

Claire Baker: I have written to the cabinet secretary recently regarding The Cannons surgery in Methil, which has recently been taken over by NHS Fife due to a failure to recruit two principal GPs. Kirkcaldy is also experiencing severe pressure, with eight surgeries now closing their lists to patients. Can she tell us how much of the additional £60 million that was announced in June will go towards supporting GP services in Fife?

In her recent reply to me, the cabinet secretary said that the Government was developing short-term recruitment initiatives. Can she tell me what discussions she has had with NHS Fife to make progress in that respect?

Shona Robison: I recently discussed a number of issues with the chair of NHS Fife. I assure Claire Baker that we are determined, through our investment of £60 million, to tackle recruitment and retention issues.

Some of those issues will be addressed in the medium to long term as we encourage more young doctors into general practice. In the meantime, we are doing everything that we can through recruitment and retention initiatives to attract both people who may have left the profession but might be encouraged to come back and those who are looking for positions in the health service in Scotland. We are offering opportunities for GPs and others to come and work in the NHS in Scotland and are looking at every opportunity to promote those.

Claire Baker mentioned the surgery in Methil. It is not uncommon for boards to take over practices to ensure continuity of service to patients, and it should not be viewed as negative.

I accept—as I am sure Claire Baker has heard me say before—that we have a lot more to do to ensure the sustainability of GP services in Fife and elsewhere in Scotland, but we are determined to do that.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): The cabinet secretary recently wrote to me, stating:

"there is an increasing awareness of practices facing sustainability challenges across Scotland".—[Written Answers, 13 November 2015; S4W-28198.]

Including the Mid Scotland and Fife region, six health boards have experienced decreases in GP numbers since 2007, and we face a shortage of 900 GPs in the next 10 years. I would like more detail from the Scottish Government today on how it will guarantee that rural and remote areas such as Mid Scotland and Fife will not be disproportionately affected by GP shortages.

Shona Robison: I am sure that Jim Hume will be aware of all the discussions that we are having around making general practice more attractive. The new contract discussions are under way; we are looking at a transition year, with a major dismantling of the quality outcome framework arrangements in advance of a new contract being put in place; and there are new models of primary care, all of which are designed to encourage young doctors to choose general practice as an option.

We will look at the other mechanisms or methods that we require in order to make general

practice the choice of young doctors and we are looking at how we expand access to medicine. We have also, of course, just expanded the number of GP training places by a third.

We are doing a lot of comprehensive work on the issue. Some parts of that will take a bit longer than other parts to deliver, but the member can be assured that we absolutely give the matter top priority.

Community Optometry Services (Glasgow)

6. Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is seeking to enhance community optometry services in the Glasgow region. (S4O-04800)

The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt): The term “general ophthalmic services” describes the national arrangements for the provision of high-street optometric services, including, since 2006, the provision of free eye examinations for people living in Scotland. Where appropriate, national health service boards, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, can use shared service arrangements to tailor service provision in their area to suit local needs, such as by rebalancing service provision from acute centres to high-street optometrists.

Many more patients are now being treated in the community, with optometrists able to manage the treatment of certain eye conditions such as glaucoma. That is supported by our recent investment of £1.5 million to provide every community optometrist with a pachymeter—a device that will help to better refine referrals for glaucoma and ocular hypertension—and to enable more patients to be retained and managed in the community in line with the Scottish Government’s 2020 vision.

Bob Doris: The minister mentioned the redesign of services in Glasgow so that my constituents can get speedier and more effective treatment in the acute sector where necessary. Does the minister agree that it is important that my constituents know that the first port of call for eye care should be the community optometrist, thereby taking pressure off the acute sector and ensuring that they get quality treatment in the local community for their eye health? Does the minister agree that we should raise awareness of that to ensure that everyone is as informed as possible and sees the most appropriate allied healthcare professional for their healthcare needs?

Maureen Watt: Yes, the Scottish Government is committed to providing a first-class community-based eye healthcare service in Scotland. As I said, treating more patients in the community is entirely consistent with our 2020 vision. Community optometrists are better placed than

ever to manage a wide range of conditions in the community. For example, the provision of national health service prescribing pads is allowing an increasing number of optometrists in Scotland to treat acute eye conditions. A third of all the independent prescribing optometrists in the United Kingdom are in Scotland.

Red and Processed Meat (Carcinogenicity)

7. Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recent World Health Organization report on the carcinogenicity of red and processed meat. (S4O-04801)

The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt): We welcome the latest report on the issue from the WHO. The report classes the consumption of red meat as probably carcinogenic to humans and the consumption of processed meat as carcinogenic to humans. The findings are broadly in line with the recommendations in 2010 from the independent United Kingdom Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, which are that we limit intakes of red and processed meat to no more than 70g a day.

Scotland’s dietary goal for red and processed meat is based on the latest evidence from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition’s report “Iron and Health”, which reflects the links between high consumption of processed meat and certain cancers while recognising that red meat is a good source of nutrients and can be consumed as part of a healthy balanced diet.

Nigel Don: In view of the additional advice from the World Health Organization based on studies that show a higher risk of colorectal cancer in people who eat a diet that is low in vegetables, legumes and whole cereals, does the minister agree that we need to heed overall collected advice about a healthy diet and recognise the value of vegetable consumption and a high-fibre diet generally?

Maureen Watt: Yes, and I recognise the member’s continuing interest in the area. He is correct that we need to look at the overall balance of the diet. Food Standards Scotland advises eating a healthy balanced diet, including plenty of fruit, vegetables and starchy carbohydrates, as well as some dairy foods and some meat, fish or vegetarian alternatives, while, as we know, avoiding foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. The Scottish Government is taking a range of action to improve diet. We are spending more than £10 million in the four years to 2016 on projects to encourage healthy eating. Those include our eat better feel better campaign, which will launch its next phase in January and will include advice on how to affordably increase fruit, veg and fibre intake.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): We know from the evidence from academics and the cancer conference that took place this Monday that public health campaigns are valuable but do not hit those of our populations that suffer the most health inequalities. Given that 40 per cent of cancers are preventable, what specific action is the Scottish Government taking on diet and public health?

Maureen Watt: In my previous answer I gave an example of some of the ways in which we are trying to improve the country's health. I recognise that, as Jenny Marra suggests, there is still inequality in relation to those who suffer from cancer, but the figures are going in the right direction. However, we know that more is needed to be done.

General Practitioner Services (Staffing Levels)

8. Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what assistance is available for general practices that encounter problems regarding staffing levels. (S4O-04802)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Over the next three years, the Scottish Government will invest £60 million, as part of the primary care fund, to address immediate workload and recruitment issues in primary care, and will put in place long-term sustainable change to support general practitioners and improve access to services for patients.

As part of that, £2.5 million will be invested in work to explore with key stakeholders the issues surrounding GP recruitment and retention. That investment is beginning the process of finding new ways of working, which is helping to address the problems of recruitment and retention that are common to primary care services across the United Kingdom

Patricia Ferguson: We have on a number of occasions in the chamber explored the deep-end practices—in particular, the Balmore practice in my constituency. What action will the cabinet secretary take to assist that practice, which has been reviewed by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and has been told that it will have further help to review its processes and help with “lean working”—whatever that might be? Such practices need help now; money that will be invested in the future will not help them out of the immediate crisis. What action can be taken to assist them now?

Shona Robison: It would be unfair to suggest that no support has been given to the Balmore practice. I have a list here of the support that is being provided. The practice is being provided

with three additional doctor sessions per week, which is providing the headroom to engage in a comprehensive review package that involves several other professional groups, in order to better understand the underlying reasons for the situation. The practice review support team includes an experienced GP and other clinical support.

I am aware that the health board has again been in discussions with the Balmore practice about extending support for it into the new year. The board has no interest in leaving the practice in a fragile state; it wants to continue to work with and support it.

In her wider point, Patricia Ferguson raised issues about which I have spoken to her before in the chamber. The new contract provides an opportunity to better recognise the needs of practices that work in areas of deprivation than the current contract does. I am very keen to take that forward. In the meantime, I will keep a very close eye on the communications between NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and the Balmore practice. It is important that those communications lead to the practice being sustainable, not just in the short term, but as we go forward.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank the cabinet secretary for meeting me to discuss retention problems at Balmore practice in Possilpark. I welcome the fact that GP locum support will be extended into January, but I ask the cabinet secretary to urge—as I have done—NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to extend that support to the end of March in order to support the practice at the height of its winter pressures and to provide it with the breathing space to find a long-term solution.

Shona Robison: I will continue to have discussions with the NHS board, as I intimated to Bob Doris when I met him and as I have said today. I want the board to do what it can to support the Balmore practice.

I should say that NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is in communication with other practices in the area that are performing very well indeed, so it is not fair to say that all the practices in the area face the same challenges. Balmore has challenges that are particular to Balmore: it is important to recognise that.

It is important that the health board supports Balmore. We want the practice to be a success and I will encourage the board as far as I can to do all that it can to support the practice through the winter and beyond.

Pancreatic Cancer (Treatment)

9. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government

what the success rate is of the treatment of pancreatic cancer and whether it will provide an update on progress with research. (S4O-04803)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): We know that the outlook for people who are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer remains poor in comparison with other cancers. In Scotland, age-standardised five-year relative survival for men is approximately 3.6 per cent and for women it is approximately 5.5 per cent.

Scotland is currently the only part of the United Kingdom whose Government is specifically co-funding research into pancreatic cancer with a charity. Our chief scientist office and Pancreatic Cancer UK committed £75,000 to fund two Scottish-led projects that submitted bids to the research innovation fund. I was delighted to confirm at the pancreatic cancer event at the Scottish Parliament earlier this week that the co-funding arrangement is to be extended for a further year, which will make almost £400,000 available to fund research into pancreatic cancer in Scotland.

Willie Coffey: I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer. She is clearly aware that survival rates for the disease lie far behind those of other cancers, particularly when measured over the one-year and five-year survival rate period. We know that early detection of cancer is vital, but it is particularly difficult with pancreatic cancer. Will the cabinet secretary consider how we make further progress with it through public education, screening or further research?

Shona Robison: At last night's event, I spoke to clinicians and patients and was struck by the importance of detecting pancreatic cancer early. Because of the nature of its symptoms, that is not easy to do. Patients who had survived had done so because the cancer had been detected early. That is why research is very important; the resources that I mentioned in my first answer will help.

We are well placed to be a leader in research. The stratified medicine Scotland innovation centre that is based at the new hospital in Glasgow is an example of a Scotland-wide initiative that will allow many diseases in the population to be studied at molecular level. I hope that the new cancer plan that we are working on with stakeholders will help to gather some of the issues for pancreatic and other cancers in order to see how we will take this forward during the next five to 10 years.

National Health Service Workforce Challenges (Rural Areas)

10. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to

tackle NHS workforce challenges in rural areas. (S4O-04804)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): We recognise the particular challenges that are faced by national health service boards in securing a sustainable workforce for the future in remote and rural areas. The Scottish Government is supporting a number of initiatives to help to address that. We are working with boards to sustain services in remote and rural hospitals by developing networks with urban hospitals. In some areas, that involves rotating staff between hospitals. Through the being here programme, the Scottish Government is funding new primary care approaches in four NHS Highland sites. NHS Education Scotland has developed rural fellowships to give qualified general practitioners the opportunity to work in rural areas and to develop the generalist skills that are required for work in those areas.

Graeme Dey: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. As she knows, the NHS Tayside 20:20 vision document seeks to increase the delivery of health services in rural settings. However, projected population-change figures for Angus up to 2037 predict a marked downturn in the number of residents from the age range from which the NHS could recruit staff, and a sizeable increase in the number of over-75s, which is the age group that is most likely to require health services.

Is the Scottish Government aware of the demographic challenge to NHS Tayside that is peculiar to Angus? What measures might be taken to tackle the problem?

Shona Robison: We are aware of that challenge and we expect NHS board workforce planners, including those in NHS Tayside, to take full account of local factors, including the demographic to which Graeme Dey has referred, in preparing the required workforce plans and projections.

We are working with human resources directors and board workforce planners to support a more consistent and sustained approach to national NHS workforce data and intelligence, to ensure that there are enough staff and that they are in the right place doing the right thing at the right time. I am sure that that will help to address some of the concerns that Graeme Dey has for parts of his constituency.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will be aware that professional recognition and pay often depend on the depth of knowledge that a clinician or member of the medical team has, rather than the breadth of knowledge that is often required in rural medicine.

What will she do to change that balance and make rural medicine more attractive?

Shona Robison: Rhoda Grant makes a fair point. We know that the skills mix and the level of skill that is required to work in rural medicine, whether in primary or in secondary care, are very challenging and are not recognised as they should be.

A lot of good work has been done on recognising rural medicine as a discipline in itself. The sustainability of the six rural general hospitals has been about putting that discipline of rural medicine to the fore. There is more work that we can do to help recruit and retain staff and I am happy to look at that in more detail as we take those matters forward.

Public Access Defibrillators

11. Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support is available to provide public access defibrillators to communities. (S4O-04805)

The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt): Increasing the accessibility of public access defibrillators—PADs—is a key part of our goal to reduce the number of out-of-hospital cardiac deaths. In 2014, the Scottish Government invested considerably in providing PADs across Scotland. That included £1 million to install defibrillators in dental surgeries and £100,000 to increase the number of PADs available across Scotland's communities. The Scottish Ambulance Service offers support and advice to organisations that are interested in putting a defibrillator in place. That includes guidance on funding sources, and there is a range of initiatives to provide support for PADs.

A key aim of our strategy for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, which was launched in March 2015, is to enable the public to recognise early signs of cardiac arrest and take appropriate action to save lives. To realise that, communities across Scotland participated in the launch of save a life for Scotland, which was held in October 2015 and provided opportunities to learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Roderick Campbell: What training is given to dispatchers at the Scottish Ambulance Service's command and control centres regarding the location of PADs and when they should be used? What procedures are in place to ensure that PADs across Scotland are accurately logged into the system?

Maureen Watt: The member makes a good point. The Scottish Ambulance Service is pivotal in the co-ordination, clinical governance, quality assurance and delivery of much of the response to our out-of-hospital cardiac arrest strategy. It has

agreed to realise a number of actions to support the successful leadership and implementation of the strategy. A key commitment of the strategy is to optimise systems and training in ambulance control centres to provide a rapid recognition of cardiac arrest and expert support to bystanders in using PADs and to maintain and extend the community first responder network.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

12. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve child and adolescent mental health services. (S4O-04806)

The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt): We introduced the CAMHS health improvement, efficiency and governance, access and treatment—HEAT—target for faster access to specialist care. That has resulted in significant reductions in the time that children and young people have to wait to access specialist child and adolescent mental health services. Since 2009, we have made £16.9 million available to national health service boards to increase the number of psychologists working in specialist CAMHS, and we have further committed another £3.5 million this year.

In May 2015, we announced an additional £85 million over five years for mental health. That is in addition to the £15 million over three years that was announced in November 2014 for the mental health innovation fund. Part of that money will go to make further improvements to child and adolescent mental health services and to bring down waiting times.

Mary Fee: The Audit Scotland report "NHS in Scotland 2015" shows that the 90 per cent target for CAMHS was not met in 2015. It was at 81.1 per cent, which was down from 98.5 in 2013, after the waiting times were lowered from 26 weeks to 18 weeks. Although reducing the waiting time is a positive step, the Scottish Government will fail young children who suffer from mental health issues unless sufficient resources are in place. Of particular concern to me are the 6,000 children a year whose referrals are rejected. Will the Government at the very least undertake an audit of the outcomes for those children?

Maureen Watt: We are disappointed that some NHS boards will not meet the target, but we should reflect on the journey that has been taken. We have seen an increase in the number of referrals from 4,734 in June 2012 to 7,077 in June 2015 and an increase in the number of children seen from 2,640 in June 2012 to 4,444 in June 2015. NHS boards are doing a significant amount of work in redesigning their services to increase their capacity to meet the CAMHS target on a sustainable basis.

We not only monitor the outcomes of the children who are in referral but continue to notice how many are not referred onwards.

Cleft Palate Unit (Edinburgh)

13. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether the cleft palate unit in Edinburgh will be retained. (S4O-04807)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Yes, because only the specialist surgical element of cleft services is within the scope of the review that is under way. All other services that are delivered by the cleft palate unit in Edinburgh and the wider cleft network are unaffected and will continue to be delivered locally, because only the specialist surgical element of cleft services is part of this consideration.

A review is under way to identify sustainable delivery of high-quality, specialist cleft surgery in Scotland. We have seen the recommendation from the options appraisal group to locate cleft surgery on a single site in Glasgow, but that does not represent our final decision at this stage.

Sarah Boyack: I thank the cabinet secretary for the clarity of that answer and say to her that parents were devastated at the decision to remove cleft surgery from Edinburgh. Surgery is a key part of that unit. Will she clarify whether the serious concerns about outcomes for patients with cleft surgery have been acknowledged? That is a key issue. People are worried that there will be damage to patient health and that the analysis was not carried out—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: What is the question?

Sarah Boyack: Is the cabinet secretary aware that the analysis to look at patient outcomes was not properly carried out; that people are very concerned that there was no proper, independent review; and that parents, patients, staff and other stakeholders were not consulted about the decision, which they were reassured four months ago would not happen?

Shona Robison: The cleft community across Scotland was consulted on the need for an options appraisal in August. The aim of the consultation was to invite comments not just from clinicians but from patients, families and the Cleft Lip and Palate Association to inform the options appraisal exercise. A public engagement meeting was hosted by the national services division and supported by CLAPA in October. That engagement highlighted that the options appraisal would consider the configuration of the cleft surgical service only, not other services.

The NSD has advised that stakeholders will have further opportunities for input before a final decision is made. The process for that, briefly, is that the findings from the options appraisal group will be considered by the national specialist services committee on 9 December. It will then make a recommendation on the way forward to NHS board chief executives, before the final recommendation is passed to the Scottish ministers for a decision in the new year.

Acquired Brain Injury Survivors (Lothian)

14. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to improve outcomes for people who have survived an acquired brain injury in Lothian. (S4O-04808)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): This year, the Scottish Government has provided £40,000 grant funding to NHS Lothian to support a pilot project, designed by the Scottish acquired brain injury network, that aims to ensure that all admitted head-injured patients will be cared for by neuroscience clinicians in a dedicated multidisciplinary service. The project aims to deliver recommendations for a systematic roll-out of the model across Scotland which, if implemented, could represent a huge improvement in standards and put Scotland at the forefront of integrated brain injury services.

Gavin Brown: Does the cabinet secretary agree that the Edinburgh Headway Group is doing a phenomenal job in the field and does she share my view that it has a vital role to play?

Shona Robison: Yes, I agree with that. I pay tribute to the work of the Edinburgh Headway Group, which does a fantastic job, as do many organisations working in the field. It is a particularly stand-out organisation, and I hope that it continues to do that work.

National Health Service Boards (Winter Planning)

15. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with national health service boards regarding planning for winter. (S4O-04809)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Scottish Government officials and I engaged with NHS boards over the spring and summer to agree and develop winter planning guidance for 2015-16. That guidance was issued to boards almost two months earlier than the guidance was issued last year. As part of the winter planning process, we met all boards at a national event on 17 September to discuss winter plans and

preparations. I have monthly meetings with the chairs of boards and, at our most recent meeting, we considered boards' winter preparations. This year, we have allocated over £10.7 million of additional funding to help boards to prepare for winter.

Colin Beattie: The cabinet secretary will be aware that NHS Lothian faced a challenging winter period last year. What reassurances can she give the people in my constituency and throughout the Lothians that the challenges will be met this year and going forward?

Shona Robison: NHS Lothian and its partners have strengthened their winter planning this year by taking an approach across all health and social care services within the board. Their winter plan sets out how the board and its partners will support the avoidance of admissions and delayed discharge this winter. The board also has contingency plans to open additional staffed acute beds in a managed and orderly way, and it is investing in its allied health professional and imaging workforce to enable seven-day working to support effective discharge.

We have learned lessons from last winter about what the additional moneys should focus on. One important element, not just in Lothian but elsewhere, will be ensuring that weekend discharge takes place and social care assessments happen over the festive period.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise to those members who have been unable to ask their questions.

House Building Programme

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-14859, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on an ambitious house building programme for Scotland. I call the minister, Margaret Burgess, to speak to and move the motion as soon as she is ready. I look forward to hearing what you have to say at your earliest convenience, minister.

14:43

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):

The Scottish Government is clear in its recognition of the critical role that housing plays in promoting social justice, strengthening communities and tackling inequalities. Our approach to tackling the full range of housing issues is both inclusive and comprehensive. We value the views of our partners and communities, as our integrated and collaborative approach to developing a joint delivery plan for housing has demonstrated. We know the issues and we are working in partnership to deliver the solutions. If we were not constrained by the 26 per cent cut in our capital budget that has been imposed by Westminster, we would be making even faster progress. However, even with those constraints, Scottish Government investment of £1.7 billion in affordable housing over the current session of Parliament means that we have made huge progress.

The Government has delivered 19 per cent more social rented homes over the past seven years than the previous Administration did over a similar period. We have delivered 34,633 social houses over the past seven years, whereas the Labour/Liberal Administration delivered 28,988 houses. To date, we have helped to fund the delivery of 5,666 completed council houses, which contrasts with the delivery of only six under the previous Labour/Liberal Administration.

The latest published statistics showed that we were 93 per cent of the way towards our overall target and 96 per cent of the way towards our 20,000 social rented homes target.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): The minister mentioned the Government's social rented homes target. However, in her manifesto, which includes a picture of a certain Alex Neil and—some members may remember him—Alex Salmond, the target was for 30,000 social rented houses.

Margaret Burgess: The member is like a broken gramophone record—he raises that issue all the time. Since 2011, we have made it very clear that our target was for 30,000 affordable houses. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Let the minister be heard, please.

Margaret Burgess: I am delighted to tell the chamber today that the Scottish Government has now not only met but exceeded its target to deliver 30,000 affordable homes. That includes our 20,000 social rented homes target, which includes 5,000 council houses. Therefore, all our targets have been met.

The information is based on our live administrative data as of the end of October. Formal confirmation of our meeting the targets and by how much they have been exceeded will follow in the regular quarterly publications of official statistics. I am sure that everyone in the chamber will agree that that is excellent news.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): The minister is clearly very pleased that she has met the target, but has she met housing need?

Margaret Burgess: I certainly think that we have met housing need better than the previous Administration did. It built fewer houses with rising budgets, while we have met the target on falling budgets. That was a challenge, but housing is a challenge and we do not deny that.

The 30,000 target is not the full extent of this Government's ambition for housing. Our ambition is much greater than that, as it always is for our country. If this Scottish Government is returned in May 2016, one of our key commitments would be to increase the supply of affordable homes still further. As announced by the First Minister in May 2015, we would deliver 50,000 affordable homes over the next five years. That announcement has been warmly welcomed by the sector's representative bodies.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Provan) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Margaret Burgess: I want to make progress—I want members to hear about our ambitious housing programme.

That is a 67 per cent planned increase in affordable housing supply and, within that, we plan to maintain our existing commitment to social housing with 70 per cent of the new target being for social rent.

Our undertaking is bold, credible and backed up with the provision of more than £3 billion of funds. It would not only deliver more affordable homes but support, on average, about 20,000 jobs a year and generate more than £10 billion-worth of activity during the next session of Parliament.

Housing is fundamental to tackling inequalities and this Government is determined to ensure that we deliver the high-quality, affordable homes that people and communities need. In the past seven

years, we have maintained our support for social rented provision by registered social landlords, with more than 25,000 RSL new-build affordable completions delivered.

We will continue to work jointly with the sector to maintain its strong contribution to meeting our ambitious new target. By continuing to work with our local authority partners, we will build on our commitment to council house building. We have protected the investment in our housing stock by legislating to end right to buy. That will prevent the loss of up to 15,500 homes over a 10-year period, helping to safeguard the supply of social rented homes for generations to come. That is an important policy point for this Government, because we want to protect our social housing stock for the future.

Housing options and choices are critical. We fund a range of housing to offer that choice—for both those who want to rent and those who want to own their own home. Just recently, we announced a £10 million increase in budget for the open market shared equity scheme, bringing our funding for the scheme this year to £80 million. We also make sure that the scheme gives priority to social renters, disabled people, members of the armed forces and veterans who have left the armed forces within the past two years.

Other routes to home ownership have been provided through our funding for the help-to-buy scheme. We want to create the right conditions for the private sector to thrive, and that scheme has supported it.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): When will the successor to the help-to-buy scheme become operational?

Margaret Burgess: I will answer that shortly.

We have announced continuing support for a more targeted affordable help-to-buy scheme and we are working with the industry to develop that approach. The announcement was made some time ago. Taken together, our investment in the help-to-buy scheme of £0.5 billion over six years will help around 14,000 households. We know from sales forms that buyers between the ages of 18 and 34 have accounted for 70 to 75 per cent of all sales across the different low-cost home ownership and help-to-buy schemes that we support.

The private rented sector plays a much bigger role in the housing market than ever before, but there are issues that need to be addressed to protect tenants in that sector. That is why—

Gavin Brown: Will the minister give way?

Margaret Burgess: Not at the moment. I ask the member to let me continue, as I want to make progress.

That is why we are taking through the Parliament the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill, which will bring security, stability and predictability for 700,000 tenants in Scotland while providing appropriate safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors. That landmark housing reform will introduce a modern tenancy for tenants and rent increases only once a year while removing the no-fault ground and giving landlords safeguards to enable them to get their home back.

The bill provides for a more professionally managed and better-regulated sector that provides good-quality homes and is attractive to those who want to live, work and invest in the sector. It will also introduce a discretionary power to allow local authorities to introduce rent controls in areas where there are excessive increases in rents and the local authority is concerned about the impact of that on housing in communities in their area.

We are fully aware of the different needs of individuals and we recognise them in funding housing for a variety of needs informed by local authorities' local housing strategies. We are also responsive to different geographies from large-scale regeneration to the town centre first principle and the need to address more remote, smaller-scale, rural housing needs. In September, in our programme for government, we committed to a new rural housing fund that will launch next year.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): The minister will be aware of the concerns in the islands that I represent about the fact that standard assessment procedure provisions do not allow mains electricity as a primary fuel source. As a result, high-specification renewables devices that are costly to operate are being attached to properties. As somebody in the industry in Orkney explained it to me, the current system is forcing the fuel poverty legacy to be designed into every home. Will the minister undertake to speak to her colleague the Minister for Transport and Islands to ensure that that is reflected and addressed in the islands bill?

Margaret Burgess: We have already had numbers of conversations with the island communities and the Minister for Transport and Islands about how we address fuel poverty and the need for energy-efficient homes in those areas. That is why we have a rural fuel poverty initiative, and the rural housing fund that will be launched will take such issues into account. We recognise that there are differences in rural and island communities.

We are working collaboratively across the private and public sectors to stimulate a major pipeline of new housing supply across all rented tenures, including by making best use of our United Kingdom financial transactions resource. We are leading the way in the groundbreaking use

of that type of funding, which must be paid back to Her Majesty's Treasury. The Scottish Government's approach to innovative financing is leaving no stone unturned in exploring new and better ways of attracting funding into the affordable housing sector.

We are approaching 4,000 new affordable home approvals through a range of innovative financing mechanisms, with hundreds more in the pipeline. We are the first—and remain the only—national Government in the UK and public sector body in Scotland to invest in charitable bonds. By 2016, we will have invested £37 million in those bonds, creating loan finance to fund affordable housing in Scotland and generating charitable donations of £1.4 million for regeneration charities and around £7 million for social housing. That could support the delivery of up to 600 new affordable homes.

The recently announced LAR—or local affordable rented—Housing Trust is a pioneering affordable housing model that will deliver up to 1,000 homes for mid-market rent. The trust is supported by a £55 million loan from the Scottish Government and is expected to attract matching private investment. Moreover, the national housing trust initiative, which was the first guarantee-based scheme for housing in the UK, has seen the completion of more than 1,000 homes and is on track to deliver more than 2,000 homes for mid-market rent across the country.

We are also supporting pension funds to invest in affordable housing. The Falkirk local government pension scheme fund has agreed a £30 million investment to deliver around 300 affordable homes, and the Scottish Government's support for that trailblazer project is an initial investment of over £6 million towards 126 social homes in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire. If other pension funds can be attracted to invest, the investment fund has the potential to expand and deliver more than 1,000 homes. We continue to outperform other parts of the UK with 79 new-build social sector completions per 100,000 population compared to 52 in England and Wales.

However, although new housing supply is one aspect of what is important, we need to ensure that existing homes are of good quality and that people can afford to heat them. Since 2009, we have allocated over £0.5 billion to fuel poverty and energy efficiency programmes, and that commitment is now paying dividends, with over a third of all Scottish dwellings now having a good energy efficiency rating of B and C. That is an increase of 56 per cent since 2010.

Access to good housing has the ability to create the right environment to allow our citizens to fulfil their potential with regard to their health, education and social interactions in their communities, and good housing goes right to the heart of the fairer

and stronger Scotland that this Government is working to deliver. The Scottish Government's ambitions for affordable housing are clear. We have demonstrated that we can deliver on our commitments and, working together with our partners, we will meet the new 50,000 affordable homes target that this Government has set for housing in Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that housing helps promote social justice, strengthens communities and tackles inequality as well as being good for the economy; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to providing access to good quality housing and recognises that it is a high priority for the current administration; commends the Scottish Government for being on course to exceed its five-year target of delivering 30,000 affordable homes by March 2016, including 20,000 social rented homes; acknowledges this achievement being made despite the drastic reduction in capital budgets as a result of the UK Government's spending cuts; further recognises that the Scottish Government started a new generation of council house building, has abolished the right to buy and is leading the way in the UK in financial innovation for housing; notes that Scotland continues to outperform other parts of the UK in housing completions, and welcomes the Scottish Government's future ambition to build a further 50,000 affordable homes for people across Scotland.

14:57

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): I begin with a plea to the Government. I welcome the fact that it has scheduled this debate on the important issue of housing, but will it finally recognise that the housing situation that Scotland currently finds itself in the midst of is a crisis?

It would appear not. In September, Labour called a debate on housing to allow the Parliament to recognise this very predicament, and we remain bitterly disappointed that the Government will not recognise that we have a housing crisis in this country. Instead, we have a self-congratulatory motion in which the Scottish Government praises itself for making a commitment that in itself falls far short of the demands in the housing sector. It also claims to be leading innovation in housing policy, but that does not stand up to scrutiny when we make a proper comparison with what is happening elsewhere in Britain.

As I made clear in the debate in September, it was and remains Labour's position that every person and family in Scotland should have access to a safe, affordable home. It is a stepping stone to social and economic equality for all. Put simply, it is imperative that housing construction targets are raised to accommodate the growing need for reasonably priced homes in Scotland. In 2014, 15,000 new homes were built, and although there is no question but that that will contribute to reducing overcrowding, improving energy efficiency and supporting communities, the

number is nowhere near enough. As I said in September, we must accept that house-building numbers in Scotland have fallen far too short for some time. That is why we are now in a crisis.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Michael McMahon: If Mike MacKenzie wants to confirm that that is the case, I would be happy to take an intervention.

Mike MacKenzie: Does the member agree that if it is the case that there is a housing crisis, the blame for that rests squarely on the shoulders of one Gordon Brown, who promised to end boom and bust and ended up breaking the system?

Michael McMahon: That is number 3 on the grievance list, I think. I am surprised that Mike MacKenzie went so far down to find his target, but we will have to accept that Gordon Brown is Mike MacKenzie's grievance point for the afternoon.

In fact, the 2014 level of construction figure is the lowest since 1947, at a time when more than 150,000 families in Scotland are waiting for a home to live in. I congratulate the Scottish Government on achieving its downgraded commitment on the building of affordable homes, but it might not notice my making that clear, as it will be too busy patting itself on the back.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Michael McMahon: I will make some progress, if the member does not mind.

It is an unavoidable truth that we need more affordable homes than the Scottish Government has built and many more than it is now committing to. We needed them yesterday. We must act swiftly and effectively, as the stakes are simply too high not to do so.

Supporting housing construction is supporting the Scottish economy. In 2014, £730 million was invested in land and building for homes. That was at a time when house building was at its lowest, but it still translated into £1.9 billion in increased economic output and £203 million in increased resident expenditure, according to Homes for Scotland. The direct economic benefit of housing construction is obvious and can be massive in scale. At the same time, 27,000 homes in Scotland sit empty with no long-term occupants.

Unfortunately, far too much of the affordable housing that exists is more likely to be of poor quality. Around half of those accommodations fall below minimum quality standards. We cannot ignore either the fact that 29,000 families in Scotland are currently assessed as being homeless and that around half of those

households are led by a person who is under the age of 30.

The problems associated with homelessness go far beyond people not finding a place to rest their head at night. Often those without a home find themselves mentally and physically ill, and with serious damage to their self-confidence and dignity. That can be especially damaging for women who make homeless applications, who are younger overall than their male counterparts.

We must continue to look for solutions to end that growing problem. Increased investment in preventing homelessness and in the quality of accommodation is only the first step. A comprehensive, multilateral approach is needed to ensure that the basic right to a home is protected for everyone in Scotland who needs that help.

Many of those who seek shelter turn to temporary housing. Although that solution is effective in the short term, it is simply not sustainable in the long term. Such accommodation is more costly and is not conducive to good health in tenants. Children in such unfit conditions are far more likely to develop problems such as chronic coughing and asthma as a result of the quality of such accommodation.

Since 2008, temporary housing applications for households without dependent children have risen in volume by 26 per cent. Local authorities are unable to keep up with the demand, as more than 10,000 households with 4,000 children now seek such accommodation.

Fuel poverty is another issue that we must tackle as winter quickly approaches. An estimated 39 per cent of households in Scotland—or 940,000—are fuel poor, and 10 per cent are extremely fuel poor. The youngest and oldest among us routinely battle hypothermia as a result of being unable to adequately heat their domicile. Energy-efficient homes are simply vital to the wellbeing of the public and communities at large.

John Mason: I do not think that anybody is really arguing with the member's description of the need, but does he have any solutions? Would he like to switch money out of the health budget or the transport budget, perhaps, into housing?

Michael McMahon: That intervention shows the lack of depth of understanding of the problem. The issues are health issues, which spending on housing will improve.

If we want to find more money for housing, we will find it. Labour will bring forward its proposals on that. However, to resort to the tired old arguments—[*Interruption.*] The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights is laughing, because he thinks this is funny. The reality is that the Scottish Government is

making a commitment to build 10,000 fewer homes than people say we need, yet John Mason wants to argue about whether we would transfer money from health or transport into the housing budget. We will find the money, because we want to build the houses. That is the priority.

The new homes that are being built need good insulation, energy-efficient systems and effective heating measures, to name but a few suggestions, but we must also work to ensure that existing homes are fitted out to make heating them successfully affordable and environmentally friendly. As a party, we believe that access to low-cost energy is vital, and it is past time that we had effective policies enacted on that principle.

The social benefits of housing construction go further than getting people off the streets and into safe homes. Homes for Scotland has estimated that more than 135,000 trees and shrubs were planted or retained during housing projects in 2014, with 77 per cent of the construction waste being recycled. Many house builders have taken commendable steps to limit their carbon output and are keeping energy standards at the forefront of their plans. Previously developed brownfield land that is deemed suitable for housing is routinely used to minimise environmental impact and promote sustainable developments.

House builders want to build homes in the right places and more should be done to help them to do so, because housing construction is good for not only the people who will occupy the new homes but the community in general. Special attention must be paid to the elderly and disabled among us, as well as to those who live in rural areas. More than 100,000 houses are currently provided for the elderly and people with physical disabilities. Those homes are constructed differently to suit the needs of disabled people and to ensure that they can live in their home for as long as possible.

Official reports have suggested that the number of older households will increase by 50 per cent in the next two decades and that the number of households that are led by a person over 80 will double. That is an issue that will only increase in severity in the coming years, so fixing the problem now is of high importance.

We must continue to fight for the housing rights of all Scotland's citizens, including those who live in rural areas. Houses in rural areas are significantly less energy efficient than houses in the rest of Scotland, and that is to the detriment of those who live in those homes and the surrounding areas. The number of rural households that are in fuel poverty is more than double the proportion in the rest of the country. As well as being embarrassing for our Government, that is heart-breaking for the families living in

those areas who cannot maintain a warm, safe dwelling.

The evidence is before us that it pays to invest in housing. The home-building industry alone supports more than 63,000 jobs. Some estimates say that 4.1 jobs are supported for every single home that is built. Increasing the supply of homes to pre-recession levels alone would create 39,000 new jobs for Scotland. The people of Scotland deserve affordable, warm and accessible homes, and they deserve them now.

Labour calls for more action than the Scottish Government plans to take. We want it to act more swiftly and broadly, and to right the wrongs that we have created to bring Scotland home. I urge Parliament to reject the complacency of the Scottish Government and to support Labour's amendment.

I move amendment S4M-14859.3, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

"believes that each and every Scot deserves a warm and secure place to call home; recognises the work of the independent Commission on Housing and Wellbeing, which concluded that 'there is very clearly a homes crisis' in Scotland, with 150,000 households on waiting lists, over 10,000 households in temporary accommodation, an estimated 940,000 households in fuel poverty and nearly half of all housing falling short of official standards; further recognises the particular housing difficulties faced by people living in Scotland's rural areas; believes that there is a need to increase the availability of accessible housing for disabled people, and believes that Scotland's ambition must be to deliver a radical programme of housebuilding as called for by Shelter Scotland, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Chartered Institute of Housing and others to build enough affordable and social rent homes to meet Scotland's needs."

15:08

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I will begin where the previous speaker left off. There is complacency written right through the Scottish Government's motion. It says at the outset

"That the Parliament recognises that housing helps promote social justice, strengthens communities and tackles inequality as well as being good for the economy".

Those truths cannot be denied, and no one will try to remove that statement from the motion.

However, other clauses in the motion are recognisable because we have heard them so often before. The first is that we apparently welcome

"the Scottish Government's commitment to providing access to good quality housing"

and recognise

"that it is a high priority for the current administration".

Let us look at the Government's record and use the motion as its agenda.

It has been said already but I say again that the Government's claim to have achieved its objective of building 30,000 affordable homes is a misrepresentation of the truth.

The manifesto commitment was to build 30,000 socially rented homes, but an early action of the Scottish Government was to revise that to 30,000 affordable homes, of which 20,000 would be socially rented, which is a much easier target to achieve. That means that if the Government achieves the objective that it describes in the motion, it will have missed its manifesto target by a full third.

Let us remember that that is not the only sleight of hand. In one year, early in the administration, the Government shrewdly switched from counting starts to counting completions. That means that when the Government counts its total at the end of this five-year period, it will count houses that were built over a longer period. There is a great deal of sleight of hand going on.

The motion goes on to call on us to acknowledge the

"achievement being made despite the drastic reduction in capital budgets as a result of the UK Government's spending cuts".

The Government's next approach is always to blame the UK Government. The problem is that in successive budgets the Scottish Government singled out the housing budget for disproportionate cuts. If that is a demonstration of how the Government treats a priority, I do not know how the Government defines "priority".

The fact is that this Government has been doing all that it can to encourage house building without taking responsibility for it. For example, it slashed the housing association grant, which meant a vast reduction in the number of houses being built by housing associations. To prevent the number from dropping and to keep building, our housing associations borrowed up to their limits and stretched their assets.

What did the Government do in relation to local authorities? It found ways to encourage councils to build houses, but almost invariably councils were left to borrow the money that was needed to meet the Government's targets. The great claims that have been made about the number of council houses that have been built under this Government might be accurate in terms of the numbers, but to suggest that the Government is paying for those council houses is to misrepresent the truth.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will Mr Johnstone give way?

Alex Johnstone: Indeed, why not?

Kevin Stewart: I do not think that the Government has ever said that it is paying for every single council house that is being built. However, this Government's policy has given councils the ability to build again. The Conservatives' previous, stupid right-to-buy policy denied councils that ability and decimated social housing in this country.

Alex Johnstone: Ah, right to buy—one of those little totems that this Government waves occasionally. The truth is that right to buy had withered on the vine and very few people were using it. Of those who were using it, as many as 70 per cent had been tenants since before the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, so if they were not allowed to buy their properties, they would simply have remained tenants. I doubt whether more than a handful of homes have been freed up for the social rented sector as a result of this Government ending the right to buy, which was simply a distraction to prevent us from noticing that the Government was failing to build homes.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: I will continue and try to get through my speech. Perhaps the member will attract the Presiding Officer's eye and be allowed to speak during the debate.

What we need to do today is to think about how we get more homes available in Scotland. That means being innovative about how we take forward investment. This Government has tried to focus on key areas. Indeed, if members read the right publications, they will discover that the Government has great respect for the potential for developing the private rented sector. That makes me wonder why it has introduced the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill. It seems that in many areas the bill will have a negative effect, taking confidence away from people who want to invest in the private rented sector and discouraging them from investing their money here in Scotland.

The Government has fallen into the habit of claiming credit for things that are not its responsibility. For example, the money that is used for the help-to-buy scheme and other schemes is allocated to Scotland by the Westminster Government's Treasury; it has not been secured through careful negotiation with private investors. The minister stands up and claims credit for the schemes simply because the Scottish Government is required to administer them in the Scottish context, but that is dishonest in the extreme.

The truth is that, as it stands, the kind of legislation being proposed by the Scottish Government is going to drive outside investment

away from Scotland. As a result, we will find ourselves with compounded problems as time goes on. If home seekers are going to meet their housing needs and their aspirations for their tenure of choice—statistics show that home ownership remains by far the preferred option—the Scottish Government can and should play a role in that. The problem is that we have heard all the excuses but have seen very little sign of any action.

I move amendment S4M-14859.2, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

"considers that the housing market must be seen in the round rather than with a particular focus on specific sectors; recognises that housebuilding in Scotland has fallen considerably with only a modest level of recovery evident; notes that the Scottish Government has missed its aim to deliver 6,000 socially-rented homes in each year of the current parliamentary session; recalls that the right to buy scheme created a revolutionary change in homeownership in Scotland, making owner-occupation affordable for nearly half a million people; notes with concern that a number of measures in the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill will have a negative effect on the housing market, and acknowledges that ambitious rhetoric will have to be matched by deliverable outcomes."

15:15

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): Since we previously discussed the housing shortcomings in Scotland, we have heard the Scottish Government pledge—we have heard it again today—to deliver 50,000 new homes in the next session of Parliament. We have also heard that the current goal of 30,000 is near to being reached. However, for the purposes of clarity, honesty and transparency, I point out that going from 30,000 to 20,000 social rented homes has left a third of the commitment to be bought with a mortgage rather than being provided by the Government.

Since we previously talked about our housing, we have heard that the current affordable housing need goal for Scotland is only half of what is really needed. The report by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland and Shelter Scotland makes that point, but the Scottish National Party's pledge is still for only half of what is needed.

The well-received report by the commission on housing and wellbeing estimated that the total number of new homes required each year is 23,000. I will give some facts. The previous Liberal Democrat-Labour coalition Government delivered 23,757 homes each year on average; the SNP Government's record is 17,691, which is almost 40 per cent less on average year on year. I therefore hardly think that it is appropriate to characterise the Government's performance as ambitious.

John Mason: The member said that the previous Administration delivered more than

23,000 homes each year, but were all of them subsidised by that Administration?

Jim Hume: That was the number of houses delivered year on year, but the current Scottish Government's reign has delivered about 40 per cent less year on year.

Margaret Burgess: Will the member take an intervention?

Jim Hume: I want to make progress as I have only a few minutes.

In its report "A blueprint for Scotland's future", the commission on housing and wellbeing stated that it

"quickly came to the conclusion that there is very clearly a homes crisis. The numbers speak for themselves: there are about 150,000 households on waiting lists, 940,000 in fuel poverty ... 29,000 people are homeless."

It is safe to say that the Scottish Government's housing goals have little regard for the current mounting housing crisis.

Meanwhile, when the Scottish Government got financial transaction consequential from the UK Government in the 2013 budget, the finance secretary called it "funny money". However, within weeks, his ministers were donning high-vis jackets to show how the money was helping people on to the housing ladder.

Back in 2014, we suggested to Mr Swinney that he should use some of the money to build homes for rent, partly to offset the move away from the SNP's 2011 manifesto commitment to providing 30,000 social rented homes in favour of homes to buy. I note that the finance secretary was positive about that suggestion and that we have started to see some of its fruits. Last week, I got confirmation from Margaret Burgess that the so-called funny money is underpinning the Local Affordable Rented Housing Trust this year. That is good, practical action that the Scottish Government has shown that it can take when it takes a break from complaining about the constitution.

What I and millions of others in Scotland expect to see is how the Scottish Government will act to increase the supply of houses across all tenancies. It is necessary to see the issue as a chain of events. Because we have limited supply and very high demand, the private rented sector is increasing; it represents 13 per cent of the entire housing market and has more than doubled in size in 10 years. Although there is no question but that the private sector is good for the economy, we want people who move into the private sector to have had a choice. No one should be forced to spend more than they can afford just to cover their rent, but almost half of all households renting in Scotland in 2013-14 received financial support to pay their rent.

The warnings are clear—unless we increase supply to match demand, the result will only be more and more people without a home. We have heard some back benchers asking where the money would come from; they just have to look at the facts. Last year, the housing budget in Scotland was underspent by £51 million. In fact, the Scottish Government underspent by £347 million, according to Audit Scotland. That is money gone to waste.

With the rate of construction of affordable housing still 40 per cent lower than it was before 2008, people are running out of options. We need a Scottish Government that will do what it says it will do and do it promptly. We need a Scottish Government that will not leave 5,000 children homeless at Christmas time.

I move amendment S4M-14859.1, to leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert:

"notes that the SNP pledged in its 2011 election manifesto to 'build over 6,000 new socially-rented houses each year', which would be a total of 30,000 over the course of the current parliamentary session; is deeply disappointed that it is set to build only 20,000 socially-rented homes by March 2016; regrets that the Scottish Ministers have repeatedly refused to acknowledge that their decision to switch to a less ambitious policy of 30,000 affordable homes has had a negative impact on the ability of thousands of families to obtain permanent, safe and warm accommodation at a time when approximately 29,000 people across Scotland are homeless and 150,000 households are on council housing waiting lists, and believes that this significant policy change, and the resultant social housing shortfall, fails to help address the housing crisis in Scotland and raises serious doubts about the Scottish Government's commitment to its future housing promises."

15:20

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am afraid that I have had to rethink the opening of my speech in light of how the debate has gone. This was an opportunity for us to come together with ideas and work together in partnership across Scotland to deal with the great challenge of housing. Instead, we have had "SNP bad" rhetoric all over the chamber, which is somewhat disappointing because, although we have some challenges, which the minister acknowledged, we can do much in partnership to tackle the issue.

Michael McMahon: Will the member take an intervention?

Clare Adamson: Not at the moment—sorry. In the last debate on housing, in September, the minister said:

"The availability of suitable good-quality housing and housing services also makes a vital contribution to the success of the integration of healthcare and social care. We are working closely with the housing sector to deliver appropriate housing support and services."—[*Official Report*, 9 September 2015; c 28.]

That lies at the heart of what we are talking about this afternoon. It is not just about the bricks and mortar of a building; it is about having a home.

Earlier this year, I watched a television programme about world poverty in which Professor Rosling spoke about poverty in the developing world. He used the comparators of families from Malawi to Cambodia to what I think he called dollar street, which is where most of the people in the chamber would find themselves living. What was key to all of that was that a home—a place to live—is an innate human necessity and an innate human right. That is as key to us here in the UK as it is to people in the rest of the world.

I have great concerns about the growing inequality in our country, and the recent figures from the Trussell Trust on food bank use highlight that inequality. However, the Scottish Government continues to lead the way on innovation in the housing sector. Its contribution to new housing supply through innovative financing approaches is substantial and growing. As has been said, 3,000 new affordable homes have been approved and around £400 million of housing investment has been unlocked by the Government. Those approaches have seen the development of products for mid-market rent and shared equity and the growth of home ownership in this country, which should be recognised.

In 2009, Shelter Scotland invited us as politicians, along with homeless children, to design and draw our ideal home. That was quite a humbling exercise for us all to do, and seeing some of the children's drawings was very moving. When we discussed housing in September, the minister said that

"everyone in Scotland should have access to a warm, safe, secure and affordable home."—[*Official Report*, 9 September 2015; c 25.]

The Government strategy document "Homes Fit for the 21st Century" lays out that aim in detail.

The links between good housing, wellbeing, social cohesiveness and social justice are established and I am sure that they are acknowledged by members across the chamber. That is why I welcome the fact that housing—particularly social housing—remains one of the Government's highest priorities, as is demonstrated by the £1.7 billion investment in affordable housing over this parliamentary session.

It has to be welcomed that today we have reached the target of 30,000 affordable homes in this parliamentary session and that that will be exceeded. We welcome the First Minister's commitment to building 50,000 affordable homes over the new parliamentary session.

Gavin Brown: Will the member at least acknowledge that the manifesto commitment on which she stood has not been met?

Clare Adamson: I acknowledge that 30,000 affordable homes have been delivered to the people of Scotland. Every single person who has been able to take advantage of one of those new homes will have welcomed that and would acknowledge that the Government is doing everything that it possibly can to tackle the problem.

The abolition of the right to buy has been key to that approach, and I take issue with what Alex Johnstone said in that respect. Abolishing the policy has significantly improved the availability of housing stock, and homes will be protected by remaining in the social rented sector in the future, which is to be welcomed.

Good housing invigorates and empowers communities and allows them to flourish. Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to have a safe place to live, to have food and clothing and to take part in the things that they enjoy. That is key.

Before I became an MSP, I was a councillor in North Lanarkshire, and I challenge Labour's suggestion that the problem arose as soon as the SNP took office. Labour has had control of North Lanarkshire Council—

Michael McMahon: Will the member take an intervention?

Clare Adamson: No, I am in my last minute—I am sorry.

As a former councillor, I know—and Michael McMahon will know as an MSP—that there are houses available in North Lanarkshire. However, the failure to look after communities and the failure of the regeneration policies of Labour councils have left some communities languishing.

We must work in partnership with our councils to improve the existing stock and make it more appealing to people, and to help to solve the crisis. I am glad that the SNP is keeping 15,500 houses in the sector because of the abolition of the right to buy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should draw to a close, please.

Clare Adamson: I am sure that the Government will continue to make progress in this challenging area.

15:27

Paul Martin (Glasgow Provan) (Lab): Like other members in the chamber, I always welcome

a debate on housing, but the Government has got the tone of the debate wrong, with a self-congratulatory motion that commends the Government on its work.

The tone of that wording does not reflect the scale of the crisis that we face in Scotland. I challenge the minister to recognise that it is all very well for us, in the comfort zone of the debating chamber, to have a debate about homelessness. I noticed that she did not use the word “homeless”. For me, the crisis that faces our country is that nearly 40,000 people in Scotland have applied for housing because they are homeless. That is the challenge that the Government must face up to.

If we want the partnership approach to which Clare Adamson rightly referred, let us have a debate about how the Government will address the challenges of homelessness. The fact is that 150,000 people are waiting for the home that they dreamed of when they submitted their application for housing. Many of the cases that I deal with—as I am sure is the case with other members for various constituencies and regions—involve people who want to be rehoused but are not given the opportunity. Those are the types of challenges that the Government must face up to.

I will be constructive in saying that I agree with Shelter, which advises us that we should look at how to use our empty homes more. That is another challenge that the Government needs to face up to, given the numbers to which Shelter refers. We as a Parliament cannot simply say, “Let’s just leave that to local authorities, as the housing authorities, to take care of.” We must show leadership.

Margaret Burgess: I do not disagree with what the member said about empty homes. The Scottish Government is funding the Shelter project through to 2019 to help to tackle that issue. We all have concerns about it and we will look at ideas from any member on how we might better deal with empty homes. We are putting money into that.

Paul Martin: The empty homes challenge was not invented a couple of weeks or years ago; it has been facing the housing industry for many years. Community-based housing associations, which I will come on to, have played a crucial role in that regard.

A number of people have commented on the issue. One is George Clarke, the United Kingdom Government’s empty homes adviser, who said:

“With thousands of empty homes across Scotland, it’s a disgrace that so many families are going without something as fundamental as a home of their own.”

George Clarke and others are to be commended for the work that is going on across the UK. That

initiative is showing leadership, but the Scottish Government also has to show leadership.

In previous housing debates, I have said that the Government could do much more in partnership with our community-based housing associations. For many years—at least since I have been an elected member, which is nearly 22 years—those housing associations have been leading the way on regenerating communities throughout Scotland and have been doing so in a sustainable manner. The houses that they have built are still there to tell the tale. Rather than cutting the grants that are available to those housing associations, the Scottish Government should invest in those community-based models.

I welcomed the apology that Bob Doris gave on that issue during our previous debate on housing, when he confirmed that the Government should not have cut the grants that are available to those housing associations. That is because they are the very organisations that are leading the way on tackling homelessness, dealing with the challenges with empty homes and ensuring that people have a good and safe home to live in. We should encourage those organisations and the good work that they are doing rather than cut the grants that are available to them.

Another challenge that faces politicians is the obsession with targets. Every single party in the Parliament faces that challenge. We think, “Here’s a box I can tick; I have met the number that is required.” The people who were involved with building the famous Red Road flats faced the same challenge. In considering where to locate 4,700 people from the slums of Glasgow and other parts of Glasgow, they decided to build the Red Road flats, because that ticked a box and ensured that the required number of homes were built. However, we did not ensure that the homes were homes for the future or that they would meet the existing and future housing need.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Paul Martin: Give me a second.

It is simply not good enough to say, “We’ve ticked the box and met the numbers, so let’s move on.” In the future, we will find ourselves in a very similar position unless we ensure that the investment takes place effectively.

I give way to Kevin Stewart.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Briefly, please, Mr Stewart.

Kevin Stewart: I do not disagree with Mr Martin’s points about some of the housing decisions in the past, which were truly awful. He says that the approach should not be just about ticking boxes and targets. Why then did Mr McMahon call for greater targets for house

building? Does Mr Martin agree or disagree with Mr McMahon?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Martin, I will give you a bit of time back for that.

Paul Martin: If the Scottish Government is going to set targets, it should first ensure that it will meet the targets. It should also ensure that any investment that takes place is sustainable. There is no point in setting a target if we do not ensure that what is built is sustainable and that it deals with the demand that is out there.

Kevin Stewart: So you disagree with Mr McMahon.

Paul Martin: I do not disagree with Michael McMahon and, actually, I do not disagree with any of the targets that have been set. My point is that we set the targets without thinking about how we ensure that they are delivered or whether the investment is good value and is future proofed. That is what housing associations and Shelter have been asking us to do—they have been asking us to meet the housing need and ensure that the houses will meet the needs of the people who have to be placed in them.

Those are the challenges that face us and the ones that we should be dealing with. We have had a number of similar debates in which the Government has not brought forward the challenges that it should be facing up to. I call on the Government to do that in the future, and I ask members to support the amendment in Michael McMahon's name.

15:34

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am very proud of the Scottish Government's record on housing. As we have heard, we are on target to deliver our manifesto commitment of building 30,000 affordable homes during this parliamentary session.

Jim Hume: Will the member give way?

Mike MacKenzie: Before I take the predictable interventions, I will say that I do not care what kind of affordable houses we build. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Hume.

Mike MacKenzie: The important thing is to build affordable housing, and that is what we have done.

Ken Macintosh: Will the member give way?

Mike MacKenzie: Not at the moment.

That is a very impressive achievement against the background of a 26 per cent cut to our capital budget. There is a world of difference between the

pre-credit crunch era and the post-credit crunch era.

Jim Hume: Will the member give way?

Mike MacKenzie: I am not even through my first minute, so I am impressed that so many members want to intervene. I must be in the right territory.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that that was a no, Mr Hume.

Mike MacKenzie: We have also shown the political courage necessary to bring the right to buy to an end—something that the Labour Party failed to do for many years.

Those are two very significant achievements. They signal a fresh approach to housing, and a fresh approach was needed. We were unable to meet the overall established need for housing in the boom years before 2007, so a fresh approach that recognised the post-credit crunch reality was a matter of urgent necessity.

As I listen to the arguments of the Opposition parties on housing, I am forced to wonder whether they have any understanding of the subject. They have attempted to describe the problem, but not one of them has presented any credible solutions.

Jim Hume: Mike MacKenzie has been going on about the manifesto commitment to build 30,000 affordable homes. I will repeat that the manifesto commitment was for 30,000 socially rented homes, but only two thirds of that has been delivered.

Mike MacKenzie: I will give Jim Hume my answer again, in case he did not hear it the first time: I do not care—

Alex Johnstone: Oh!

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Mike MacKenzie: —what sort of affordable homes they are, and neither do the people who move into them.

Housing debates always seem to dwell only on social housing, as if the public sector could ever solve the housing problem on its own. Opposition parties have criticised us because we are building shared equity housing—I am very surprised to hear that criticism from Tory members. The criticism ignores the vital part that the private sector plays in helping to solve the housing problem and the necessity of getting young people on the first rung of the housing ladder. That is the problem with Opposition parties: they are always prepared to throw the baby out with the ideological bath water.

Of course there is a housing challenge, but it is nothing compared to the crisis that we see south of the border.

Ken Macintosh: There is a crisis in England but not here?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Mike MacKenzie: The stark fact is that there is an established need for 35,000 new houses per annum across all tenures.

Ken Macintosh: I did not mean to intervene from a sedentary position, Presiding Officer.

Is Mike MacKenzie genuinely saying that there is a housing crisis but that he does not accept that there is a housing crisis in Scotland?

Mike MacKenzie: I am saying that the problem in England is worse than the problem in Scotland, thanks to the good works and actions of the Scottish Government.

The stark fact is that, pre-credit crunch, at the height of the boom, we were building only 25,000 new houses a year in Scotland. After the credit crunch, we have only just now worked our way back to building 15,000 new houses a year. Of course there is a challenge, so I am pleased that the First Minister has leaked part of our manifesto well ahead of next year's election and given a commitment to build 50,000 new affordable homes over the next parliamentary session.

Alex Johnstone: Will the member give way?

Mike MacKenzie: No. I have heard enough from Alex Johnstone this afternoon.

That commitment demonstrates that, even as we brace ourselves for continuing austerity and significant on-going cuts to our budget, housing is at the very top of our agenda. It also demonstrates an understanding that decent housing underpins the social fabric of our country, that it represents a vital part of our economy, and that there are few better investments than housing for economic multipliers and the creation of jobs. On that point, I am grateful to Homes for Scotland and its analysis, which suggests that 4.1 jobs are created or saved for every house that is built. I suggest the figure is even higher in rural areas, where economies of scale are not so easily found. That why I am glad of the Government's recent announcement of a rural housing fund, which recognises the significant part that housing plays in the sustainability of rural communities.

I also pay tribute to the Government's quest to find innovative financial models for new methods for funding housing, recognising that the banks are still not lending and that new housing, whether for sale or for rent, represents a good and secure long-term investment.

The delivery of housing requires an efficient and effective planning system. The Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 was conceived and delivered in times that are different from those that we now face. Incremental improvement has not been sufficient to deliver the necessary change in planning culture. That is why I am delighted that the First Minister has announced a root-and-branch review of the planning system.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close.

Mike MacKenzie: We will not deliver an adequate supply of housing unless we have a comprehensive approach that seeks to work with public and private sector partners. I am delighted that the Scottish Government is taking that approach, and I am confident that it will deliver the new target of 50,000 homes in the next parliamentary session.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before we move on, I remind members that if they do not wish to take an intervention, the courteous response is just to say, "No thank you."

15:42

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I also find myself about to deliver a speech that is different from the one that I intended to deliver because of the strangeness of the debate.

It is particularly galling, especially for folks who are watching the debate at home, that the Opposition is very good at pointing out problems but never, ever offers any solutions or says what it would do differently or how it would fund that different policy. It is always the great escape away from facing up to the fact that we have restricted budgets.

Jim Hume: Will the member give way?

Kevin Stewart: I will give Mr Hume the opportunity to come back on something that I want to say later.

We got what we expected in the Tories' attack on the demise of the right to buy. However, that policy that has allowed councils across this land to build new council houses, which our folks greatly needed. I have to say, however, that in some local authorities, including my own in Aberdeen, that seems to have stalled.

I come to Mr Hume now. We heard the usual bleating from him, but he offered no alternatives. He seemed to attack the private rented sector today. Although I am not a huge fan of the private rented sector, I ask him whether that was a real attack.

Jim Hume: No, not at all. I just recognised that things have changed.

I want to address the member's point that no ideas have come up. Audit Scotland reported that, last year, £51 million of the housing budget in Scotland was not spent. If that money had been spent, surely it would have gone a long way towards addressing homelessness in Scotland.

Kevin Stewart: I am glad that Mr Hume did not attack the private rented sector.

I looked at Mr Hume's entry in the register of members' interests during the debate—I did not hear any declaration about this—and I noted that he seems to have seven properties: five in Edinburgh, one in Fife and one in East Lothian, one of which I assume he lives in. It would be interesting to know whether he rents out the others and if his attack on the private rented sector was an attack on himself as a landlord.

Mr Hume well knows that the £51 million will have been subsumed into this year's budget and will be invested in the priorities of the Scottish Government.

Let me turn to some of the things that I wanted to mention in the debate. Aberdeen has high-cost housing—

Ken Macintosh: On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stewart, I have a point of order.

Kevin Stewart: A point of order?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is not ideal in the middle of a speech. Ken Macintosh has a point of order.

Ken Macintosh: Mr Hume can defend himself—far be it from me to do so—but I ask the Presiding Officer whether it is in order for a colleague to question the integrity of another when he made no reference whatsoever to the private rented sector or his own interests in it.

There are members across the chamber—certainly, there are many members of the Scottish National Party—who own properties and rent them out. I do not think that making accusations against Mr Hume helps Mr Stewart's argument or the debate in the chamber. I ask the Presiding Officer to look into whether that is treating members with respect.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order, Mr Macintosh. You have made your point. What he raises in his speech is up to Mr Stewart.

Kevin Stewart: I will follow on from that, because Mr Hume mentioned the private rented sector in his speech; what he did not do is declare his own interest. That is public knowledge, because it is in his entry in the register of

members' interests. I was just raising what is there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Stewart, could I hurry you along? There is not a lot of time left in the debate.

Kevin Stewart: Aberdeen has high-cost housing and high demand, a council house building programme that has stalled and regeneration opportunities such as Broadford Works that private entities have not brought forward. There is a real problem for my city.

I am glad that Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have put housing at the heart of their city deal bid. I fully support that. We also have to look at other aspects to back up that house building, including investment in water and sewerage.

Manchester is an extremely interesting case. I paid a visit to Manchester recently with colleagues from the Local Government and Regeneration Committee to hear about the greater Manchester pension fund. I pay tribute to Councillor Kieran Quinn, the chair of that pension fund, and Peter Morris, the executive director, for their enthusiasm, proactivity and vision for investing in housing. The greater Manchester pension fund has provided the capital to fund developments, while Manchester City Council and the Homes and Communities Agency south of the border have provided five sites. Of the 500 homes being built, half are being built for sale and half for market rent, with a mix that was determined by commercial factors. I understand that Falkirk Council will make use of its pension fund to do likewise and will invest in housing in Scotland. I hope that other pension funds follow suit.

That action demonstrates an approach that involves not only pointing out problems but offering solutions. That is what we should be doing more of here, instead of abdicating our responsibilities. Whether we are in government, in opposition or on the back benches, we must point out how we would resource the things that we want to see. That approach has been sadly lacking today. I hope that, in future, some of the Opposition parties take a different approach. We must not only point out problems; we must find solutions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I allowed Mr Stewart a bit more time because of the interruption, but I am afraid that I must now ask members to stick to six minutes.

15:49

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I want to give an Edinburgh

perspective on the debate; I do not want to get too involved in the statistical battle.

Alex Johnstone made some interesting points, which are reflected in a report that was published by the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee in the first few months of this session.

I also make the point that we must be careful not to compare apples with pears. The figures for the previous Administration were for social rented housing, and the figures for this Administration are for social rented housing plus other forms of affordable housing. I looked at the five years when I was Minister for Health and Community Care and then minister with responsibility for housing and saw that, basically, the social rented figures for those five years are broadly comparable to those in the current five-year period. The conclusion that I draw from that is that neither Government has built enough social rented houses, so let us concentrate on need. That is the right starting point for this debate.

The commission on housing and wellbeing, Shelter, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and the Chartered Institute of Housing all say that we need 12,000 affordable houses a year, and Shelter says that at least three quarters of them should be socially rented.

The City of Edinburgh Council has also done its assessment of need, in partnership with others. It has said that 16,000 houses are needed in the next 10 years. The percentage of social rented housing is particularly important for Edinburgh because it has by far the longest housing waiting list in Scotland. I saw a graph today—Edinburgh was way above the second council on it. That is reflected in the fact that in Edinburgh there are routinely 200 applicants for a council or housing association house. That happens every day of the week.

I recently met a housing association chief executive who emphasised the centrality of housing association grant—HAG—levels for the number of socially rented houses that his housing association could build. He gave the example that with the current HAG level for each house of £58,000—which is actually an increase; it had plummeted to £36,000 three or four years ago—he can have a 50-50 mix of social rented and other forms of affordable housing. There is a recommendation from a high-level committee to the Scottish Government that the HAG level should be raised to £70,000. That chief executive said that if that were to happen he could build 70 per cent socially rented houses and 30 per cent other affordable houses.

Mike MacKenzie: Will Malcolm Chisholm take an intervention?

Malcolm Chisholm: If I have time at the end I will take an intervention, but I have a lot to get through. I like taking interventions, but I have three other points that I want to make—four actually, because the first one is that the other big problem in Edinburgh is sites: many landowners are sitting on land and waiting for an increase in value. In fact, there is in Edinburgh land that is just sitting there with housing planning permission for 9,000 homes, but it is frozen. The City of Edinburgh Council has an important role to play, which I think should include compulsory purchase orders.

I have three other local issues that I want to raise in my remaining three minutes. First, if members have been down Leith Walk recently, they will have seen lots of new houses—all student accommodation. We had an interesting discussion at Leith central community council on Monday about that. The City of Edinburgh Council currently has revised student housing guidance out for consultation, so obviously it is not final. I will read one sentence from it:

“Balanced sustainable communities require the dominant residential component to be permanent and not transient.”

I am certainly not against student accommodation, but I think that too much of it can destabilise the mix. Some people at the community council took an even stronger view than that. It is important that Edinburgh is trying to say that we need to restrict the percentage of such accommodation. Some rulings from the reporters unit recently have overruled the council and said that it has to take very high percentages of student housing.

Secondly, we need land to be available for big housing developments. Sometimes we have applications for small housing developments in inappropriate places that are not going to do anything to meet the housing needs of Edinburgh. There are two classic examples in my constituency at the moment. One is an application to destroy a restaurant at Canonmills and build a very small number of houses on the site. The other is to build at the foot of Trinity Road an even smaller number of large houses, which are going to tower over one of the most beautiful conservation areas in Edinburgh. The local council has rejected both applications, and hundreds of local people have opposed the developments. It is in the hands of the reporters unit, and I know that the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners’ Rights will not want to get involved, but I draw it to his attention that there will be uproar in my constituency if the reporters unit goes against the democratic decision of the council and the wishes of hundreds of local people. The issue highlights a democratic deficit in the planning system.

Finally, I welcome the place standard that is being worked on by NHS Health Scotland. It talks

about the importance of social capital, which I suppose could be said to be social networks and people doing things for each other—a sense of community.

The community of the year is in my constituency. It is called Lorne. There are tenants there who are fighting for their homes because the landlord, which is a charitable trust, wants them to move so that it can sell off the houses. They have held a magnificent campaign. I am due tomorrow to ask a parliamentary question about the situation. However, as it is question 9 on the *Business Bulletin* we may not get to it, so I will make my point now. The Lorne community association is looking for alternative solutions, whether that means the properties being sold to a housing association or to a co-operative. They do not want their community to be destroyed. All my question asks is what support the Government will give. The minimum support would be verbal support, with the Government saying, “We’re on your side”. However, if more support could be given to that community, it would be greatly appreciated.

Is it too late to take Mike MacKenzie’s intervention, Presiding Officer? I have already had six minutes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It would need to be very brief.

Malcolm Chisholm: He is declining to make the intervention now, and I have made all my points. Thank you, Presiding Officer.

15:55

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): I, too, welcome the First Minister’s announcement last month that, if it is re-elected, the SNP Government will build another 50,000 affordable homes. However, members from across the chamber have argued that the target is not ambitious enough. That view deserves a hearing.

The target that has been set is not a limit on the Scottish Government’s ambition, but we must be cognisant of the fact that nothing takes place within a vacuum. We cannot get away from the fact that Westminster has cut Scotland’s capital budget by 26 per cent in real terms between 2010 and 2016. We all know that more houses need to be built and that these are challenging times, and the minister has also stated on the record that her officials are working tirelessly on innovative ways to use reducing finances in order to ensure that they can be stretched further. However, I will focus on another facet of the debate.

In June this year, the Scottish Government published its joint housing delivery plan, which takes as its starting point the Government’s housing and regeneration outcomes and the

strategy document “Homes Fit for the 21st Century”. I will focus on two of the actions that came out of that delivery plan: place making and sustainability. On place making, the plan acknowledges that although people want to influence what happens in their neighbourhood, that regeneration and new housing can often appear to happen despite a community’s wishes and concerns.

As Homes for Scotland has outlined, of particular concern at the moment is the fact that local development plans continue to identify land that is unlikely to deliver much-needed new homes because either there is no market demand in an area or it is not economically viable. A striking example of that is in St John’s Town of Dalry, in Dumfries and Galloway, where the local housing partnership developed brand new two-bedroom and three-bedroom family houses for shared equity, half of which are still sitting empty because there is simply no demand for family homes that are so far from jobs.

Although I have no doubt that the root-and-branch review of the current planning system will create a more effective system that recognises and reflects the importance of local housing delivery and acts as an enabler at that level, efforts to make the existing system function better are to be welcomed. I am pleased, therefore, that the plan outlines clear actions to do just that. Developing a clear understanding of meaningful community engagement in the development and planning process will allow truly community-led regeneration and new communities to flourish.

It is important to say that that will hinge on improved capacity building across all sectors of the community through support from community anchor organisations and other local agencies. To that end, Dumfries & Galloway Small Communities Housing Trust is working with its Highlands and Islands equivalent and with Rural Housing Scotland to create a new community housing alliance. The principal aim of the Dumfries & Galloway Small Communities Housing Trust is to work with small rural communities to identify and address local housing needs as part of wider rural regeneration. Building on that, the purpose of the alliance would be to encourage and provide practical assistance to community groups who want to improve and increase delivery of local housing across Scotland. That is much needed and I am encouraged that the wheels are in motion to start building capacity in that area.

Housing will be central to Scotland’s efforts to combat fuel poverty and to achieve the ambitious goals that are set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Fuel poverty is prevalent in all parts of Scotland, but the availability of mains gas and standard tariffs varies, meaning that many

rural areas—including mine—are unable to use those fuel sources, which leads to significantly higher heating costs. Fuel poverty in Dumfries and Galloway currently sits at 45 per cent—higher than the Scottish national average. Part of the plan that I have mentioned focuses on developing a specific set of actions that will be relevant to rural and remote off-gas properties, and on feeding those actions in to the development of fuel-poverty policy and new energy efficiency programmes.

A pioneering local example is the Dormont Park development just outside the small village of Dalton in Dumfries and Galloway. The development was designed and specified to the exacting pioneering PassiveHaus standards by White Hill Design Studio, which is a local architecture practice that specialises in sustainability and low-energy design. I very much encourage such developments. The development was funded by a Scottish Government pilot project that has come to an end.

Although it is vital to focus on building as many affordable homes as we can, that must coincide with a focus on developing robust long-term plans to tackle the different fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues in off-gas and rural areas, as well as looking at how the housing sector engages with communities to build places where people want to live. Only then can we describe the programme as truly ambitious.

16:00

Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): As a councillor here in Edinburgh prior to coming to Holyrood, and during my term as MSP, a historical difficulty has shown itself regularly throughout my time as an elected member: the supply of social affordable and rented accommodation.

As a child, my family moved to the Clermiston area of the city. As far as I remember, every house there was council owned. Now, thanks to the right to buy, virtually every house in that area is privately owned. I have to admit that my parents took advantage of the scheme as my father realised that the deal that was being offered was too good to ignore. Now, of course, there is a lack of social and affordable housing in Edinburgh and elsewhere as a result of that scheme. A situation that many members may recognise from their areas showed itself back in 2008 or 2009—just after what we now call the boom years—when 1,000 applications were made for a council flat in the ward that I represented on the City of Edinburgh Council.

I commend the Scottish Government for ending the right to buy and for being on target to produce 30,000 affordable homes, including 20,000 social rented homes, by 2016. That has been achieved

in the face of the slash-and-burn economic policies of the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition, of the Tories now on their own, and prior to that, of the Blair-Brown Labour Party. It is no wonder that most people believe that this SNP Government has acted in the best interests of the people of Scotland.

The Scottish Government plans to build another 50,000 affordable homes. I wholly support that highly commendable goal, but I add a note of caution. At the present time, my constituency is faced with the possibility of being overrun by housing developments without having the infrastructure to cope. The area from Newbridge to Maybury and South Gyle and north to Barnton and Cammo is one of the biggest traffic blocks in Scotland. St John's Road and Queensferry Road are among the worst-polluted roads in the UK. There is nothing in the second attempt at the local development plan, which should have been passed months ago by the council, that could mitigate traffic congestion along the two most important western road approaches to the city centre of Edinburgh.

However, because the city council planning committee has failed to provide a precise local development plan for consideration, areas such as Maybury and Cammo could be opened up for development, should the reporter agree to that. Housing developments should be sustainable and should create good, safe communities, but I and many others fail to see how those two areas can be made so without traffic infrastructure being put in place. I also say that the community of East Craigs would be incredibly badly affected if the infrastructure of Maybury and Cammo were to be not upgraded to a proper level to allow the areas to be developed.

I totally agree with much of what Malcolm Chisholm said, particularly about land banking—there are serious pressures in Edinburgh. The problem in Edinburgh is extremely difficult. We desperately need housing, but the local planning authority is not—in my opinion and that of others—addressing the basics. Before I go any further, I say that the Edinburgh tram line makes no difference to traffic volumes going into the city along the Queensferry Road and Corstorphine Road corridors.

It is my hope that ministers in the Scottish Government can discuss the strategic growth of our capital city with council officials and elected representatives in order for sustainable housing developments to take place. My fear, should a way not be found to do that, is that development will be unsustainable and Edinburgh will find itself in the position where, unless people are incredibly wealthy or already have access to property, they will not be able to live here. Edinburgh's economy

is such that we need more people to live in the city.

I am delighted that, in my constituency, the 21st century homes initiative has been moving forward in Muirhouse and Pennywell, with more than 700 new homes in the pipeline. According to a report by the City of Edinburgh Council's health, social care and housing committee of 10 November, about 30 households are taking advantage of the help-to-buy scheme. Elsewhere in the city, we have seen either plans for developments or actual developments at Gracemount, Craigmillar, Leith and Sighthill.

Since the financial crash of 2008, things have not been easy for private or publicly backed housing development. I became very aware of that when I was a director of the City of Edinburgh Council's arm's-length development company, EDI Group Ltd. I joined the board in pretty desperate financial times. Although the financial markets have stabilised, the fact that budgets for the Scottish Parliament and local authorities have been diminishing in real terms still makes life difficult. Nevertheless, we require housing, and I commend the Scottish Government for its various initiatives and models for achieving capital investment.

We need not just housing but proper strategic planning and infrastructure in order to build safe sustainable communities, and to ensure that our capital city remains viable in the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Hanzala Malik, to be followed by John Mason. There is now a little bit of time available for interventions.

16:06

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): Thank you and good afternoon, Presiding Officer. It is a pleasure to know that I may have extra time. That is rare for me because I am usually at the end.

It is a pleasure to talk about the ambitious home building programme for Scotland. Housing is one of the most important of the issues that bring constituents to my office. Poor-quality housing, overcrowding and a general lack of affordable housing are common problems for the people of Glasgow and across Scotland.

Margaret Burgess's motion is an interesting one. The Scottish Government is patting itself on the back for exceeding its five-year target to deliver 30,000 affordable homes by March 2016—we should remember that the target is for affordable homes and not for social homes. It is good to try to meet targets, but it is more important to meet the needs of ordinary people. That the target falls short of the mark is proved by the fact that 150,000 households are still on waiting lists and

more than 10,000 households are in temporary accommodation. I am sorry to say that the rate of house building is just not good enough.

Several colleagues have quoted the report by three of Scotland's leading housing organisations that analyses housing need as being at least 12,000 affordable homes a year for the next five years. That is double the current target. Homes for Scotland has said that housing production is 40 per cent lower than it was in 2007, despite the fact that we have a record population and a growing number of households. That is a better reflection of what my constituents tell me every week than the Scottish Government's self-congratulation.

Let us look closely at the affordable housing need and the type of tenancies that are provided. To make the figures look good, the Government has allowed house developers and housing associations to build pigeon lofts with very small rooms as homes. A debate on that issue was brought to the chamber by Alex Johnstone MSP, who asked the Government to introduce minimum room sizes for new-build housing. I joined in the debate, asking for larger homes that reflect the current needs of real families, but of course that would not look good for the number of houses that we build. There is perhaps a bit of camouflaging.

The right to buy has been abolished in Scotland to ensure that the stock of social rented housing is maintained, but why is the Scottish Government not doing more to increase that type of housing? Shelter Scotland wants an affordable housing programme with at least three quarters of homes being provided through social rents. Once we have sorted out our housing shortage and the people of Scotland are in houses that meet their needs, we can focus on home ownership.

With nearly half of all homes falling short of official standards, we need to improve the existing housing stock and make more land available for building on. I would very much like the Scottish Government to use the tools at its disposal to unlock brownfield sites, to build infrastructure and to encourage investment by, for example, supporting good financial schemes such as the housing association resource for investment scheme, which is a special purpose vehicle that has been set up to allow housing organisations to pool their resources in order to access larger-scale yet affordable finance.

Many members, particularly from the SNP, have suggested that we have given no examples of how to move forward. I have certainly given a couple, and I am sure that there are many more. Of course, this is not all about money; the Government needs to listen to the call by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations for practical support to be given to the sector in order to deal with the challenges of procurement law.

I repeat that it is now time to meet housing needs, not targets. We need to get out of our seats and do something. I agree with my colleagues that we need to work together on issues; indeed, Clare Adamson spoke very passionately about working on ideas together. The fact is that the Labour Party consistently comes up with ideas, but, unfortunately, they fall on deaf ears.

Once again, I ask the minister to get to grips with this issue. She needs to stop worrying about convincing us that small homes are meeting people's needs today, because I can assure her that they are not. Constituents of mine cannot get a house because their families are too large. The homes, affordable or otherwise, are simply not available, so I am sorry, but I have to disagree with the minister's thesis that the Government is meeting its targets. The minister will have met her targets when people have the houses that they need. I am sorry, but until then, I will continue to say that she has not, and she needs to try harder.

16:13

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): As in all debates, we need to strike a balance between the good things that have been achieved, and the challenges that we face and the needs that we have to meet. The idea that we can paint housing and house building as totally good or totally bad news is far too simplistic.

Clearly, the advantages of good housing will be accepted by almost everyone in the chamber. People get somewhere warm, dry and safe to live in; if their homes are well insulated, they can afford to heat them; young people have the room to study and therefore will benefit educationally; and building and maintenance jobs are available. As a result, the fact that 30,000 affordable homes are going to be achieved is something well worth celebrating.

Abolishing the right to buy has also been an achievement. Council and housing association houses, especially in the more attractive areas, had been drifting away for years, reducing the chances of needy individuals and families getting a suitable property. When I talk about "a suitable property", I am thinking not just about the physical properties—for example, whether it is the right size or whether, if we are talking about old folk, there are any stairs. Healthy communities need a mixture of housing to allow people to stay in close proximity to their families. Many constituents come to me about housing. Although the type of house or flat that they need might certainly be available, parents, say, are desperate to stay near the grandparents so that their kids can get support; someone might need to care for a disabled relative in the area; or a child with particular needs might

be very settled in a particular school, and they will not want to move school every time the family needs to move house.

Paul Martin: Does it not concern John Mason that housing associations provided those very homes that his constituents are applying for in the east end of Glasgow, which we have shared responsibility for for many years, but the cutting of the housing association grant has meant that that development almost came to a standstill?

John Mason: I will go on to some of my local developments, but there is certainly a considerable amount of development by Parkhead Housing Association and Shettleston Housing Association in my constituency and the Commonwealth games village.

One of the advantages of cutting the HAG rate, which I think was temporary, was that some housing associations were sitting on unring-fenced—or whatever the term is—reserves and the effect of the lower HAG rate for a time was to bring some of that money back into the housing equation. For example, Parkhead Housing Association bought houses off the shelf in the Belvidere village without any grant because it had that money sitting there.

Another area of need that the housing system can struggle with is where a father needs a spare room or rooms in order to have his kids stay at weekends, for example, or where families want to foster or adopt and they need extra rooms. There can be informal arrangements in which a single mother needs help and friends need a spare room to take her kids for a few days. I am not suggesting that every household requires an extra room just in case they need it, but I argue that such social and community factors are not always well catered for in our housing provision and housing allocation policies.

Looking forward, we need more housing. Everyone accepts that, and I very much welcome the SNP commitment to 50,000 affordable homes in the next five years if we are re-elected.

Maintaining and improving existing housing is linked to new housing. If we maintain and improve the existing housing better, it is clear that we will not need as many new houses. In Glasgow and elsewhere, many home owners are not investing in their properties as they need to. That may be because they just ignore the problems, but more often than not it is because they struggle to afford the work that is needed. If we as a society can look after our existing housing stock better, that in turn will take some of the pressure off the need for new housing.

We cannot just leave owner-occupiers to their own devices. Many older folk with low incomes cannot maintain their properties, and we as a

society have a responsibility to help. Some owner-occupiers were misled by the Conservatives. The Conservatives celebrate the right to buy in their amendment, but they failed to spell out to people who had never owned a property that heavy maintenance costs go along ownership.

I have wondered about introducing a member's bill if I was re-elected that would look at having more good-quality factors with sinking funds in shared properties such as tenements. In that way, perhaps more essential maintenance work and improvements such as insulation would be carried out.

As we focus on the genuine challenges, let us not forget the good things that are happening. Members will not be surprised to hear me mention the local Commonwealth games village once again, with its 700 homes—300 were for sale and 400 were for social rent. However, the games and the village were never meant to be ends in themselves. Therefore, I find it very encouraging that Link Housing Association, which I used to work for, plans to build 550 units, 300 of which will be affordable and 250 of which will be owner-occupied, very close by, where the Dalmarnock power station used to be. That is very much thanks to the Clyde Gateway urban regeneration company, which has worked to decontaminate that land. That money has gone into housing, although I suspect that we would not normally call that money part of the housing budget.

We have had some very useful briefings for the debate, including from the likes of Shelter and the SFHA. I also thank Glasgow City Council for specific numbers that it gave me on housing developments in my constituency. For example, 459 houses are currently under construction around Baillieston and another 168 have recently been completed. Another 1,041 are going through the planning process or have the potential to do so. So there is a fair bit of good news around, as well.

Another challenge is whether to invest in mainstream housing or specialist provision, such as sheltered or very sheltered housing or housing for disabled people. The Finance Committee previously looked at that.

Finally, we should mention refugees at this time. In the short term, we can understand the argument against bringing in an additional family from overseas if there is only one empty house in a village and two local families need it. However, that is very much a narrow, short-term argument. There are many reasons for welcoming refugees, which include our humanitarian need to help them, the fact that Scots have been helped in the past when they went overseas, and the fact that our economy benefits in the long term from doing so. Scotland and the UK are rich countries on the

world stage, and I do not see any conflict between providing housing for our own people and doing so for refugees and asylum seekers.

16:19

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Housing is, of course, of great importance to people right across the country, and that is reflected in the case load that many of us have. After all, our home is where we spend much of our lives—it is where we sleep, study, eat and relax. Securing a home that is suitable to one's needs and those of one's family at an affordable rent or price is paramount in all of our lives.

To facilitate that, it is essential to provide a variety of housing types while making conditions right to ensure a continued housing supply to meet the ever-increasing demand and to replace substandard stock. Government must have a role in planning, funding, encouraging and constructing house building projects, particularly in areas where demand outstrips supply. To meet that challenge, the SNP Government is investing more than £1.7 billion in affordable housing over the current parliamentary session. Along with the rest of my colleagues, I am delighted that we have now exceeded our target to deliver 30,000 affordable homes. As the minister told us, that figure includes 5,000 council houses. That is a somewhat marked improvement on the six council houses that the previous Labour-Liberal Administration managed to build over a full four-year term in power, which is an issue that members of those parties understandably remain uber-sensitive and embarrassed about.

As we have heard, the SNP Government has also abolished the right to buy to ensure that we maintain high-quality local authority housing stock for future generations. Despite Labour members' rhetoric in this chamber regarding council housing, in Wales—the only place where Labour remains in government—a meagre 20 council houses have been built in the past eight years and the right to buy remains sacrosanct.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that Scotland spends 85 per cent more per head on social housing than England and Wales do. Of course, given the cuts of more than a quarter to this Parliament's capital budget, we are limited in the amount of building that we can fund directly. It is for that reason that innovative models of delivery such as the national housing trust are so integral to meeting housing demand. Working with 16 separate developers, local authorities and lending institutions, the Scottish Government has delivered 1,350 homes across 10 council areas. In the process, it has supported 1,750 jobs in the construction industry.

Housing not only serves a purpose in itself; as colleagues have mentioned, it is a vital part of our economy that employs tens of thousands of people in design, supply, construction, logistics and maintenance. In North Ayrshire, the building developer Lovell is trialling a new state-of-the-art method of measuring the economic impact of an affordable housing project on the local community, which will show just how much investment a housing project brings to an area by tracking where the money is spent and respent in the wider economy.

I am pleased that, as well as using the innovative national housing trust model, the SNP Government is exploring the use of charitable bonds to fund the construction of affordable homes. As the minister said, those bonds have now raised some £37 million, which could allow housing associations to build up to 600 homes across Scotland.

Of course, making use of existing stock that lies empty also makes sense, and Paul Martin talked about that at some length. The Shelter-run Scottish empty homes partnership works with councils to help bring empty private sector homes back into use. Since 2010, the partnership has brought more than 900 homes back into use and encouraged 17 of Scotland's 32 local authorities to appoint dedicated empty homes officers. In June, the minister announced a £4 million fund to help bring even more empty homes and high street units back to life. That fund will result in an additional 478 homes being brought back into use across 17 different projects.

The creation and execution of an affordable, effective and workable housing policy is complex, yet although there are challenges to be met, as we have heard in great detail, it is evident that the SNP Government is delivering on its key commitments and providing safe, warm and affordable homes.

Labour's contribution to today's debate—excluding Malcolm Chisholm's speech—reminds me of a line from the 1991 PM Dawn song "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss":

"Reality used to be a friend of mine".

Michael McMahon actually blushed when John Mason asked how Labour would pay for its uncosted, woolly proposals. The intellectually lazy argument that we should just build more houses fails to recognise the relentless assault on Scotland's budget and harks back to the days when Labour in Glasgow built housing schemes without shops, community centres or even pavements, as I can attest as someone who was once a councillor in Pollok.

One also wonders where housing fits in with the decision that was taken at Labour's conference,

which has committed Labour to establishing a debt disposal department, whose sole responsibility will be to use the Scottish Parliament's new borrowing powers to raise the funds, not to build new houses or invest in infrastructure but to buy back the £28 billion of private finance initiative debt that Labour itself ran up.

Labour's position reminds me that, after her recent visit to meet her colleagues in Wales, Kezia Dugdale talked about Welsh education minister Huw Lewis's approach to policy making:

"I said to him, 'where are you finding the money from for these other big commitments?' and he said they would worry about that later."

Just like her colleagues in Wales, Kezia Dugdale and her party have no credibility when it comes to tackling housing or other big issues in Scotland. Only the SNP has shown in government that we have the imagination, creativity, vision and ability to meet Scotland's housing needs. We will continue to do so in the years ahead.

I urge members to support the motion.

16:25

Jim Hume: What I heard this afternoon in the open debate was SNP members again pointing the finger at Westminster and accusing it of making cuts to the budget. Same old, same old; I have had about nine years of that here.

What the Scottish Government continually avoids mentioning is the money that it has but is not spending. There was a £51 million housing underspend in 2014-15, with another £7 million in 2013-14. Indeed, last year the total underspend was £347 million. If that money had been used, would 5,000 children still be homeless this Christmas? If the Scottish Government had been honest with people in Scotland in 2011, would 10,000 more families have got off waiting lists and been housed?

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights (Alex Neil): I suggest that Jim Hume talks to his good friend Sir Danny Alexander, who of course was the person responsible for 26 per cent cuts in capital spending. Even Sir Danny will admit and explain to the member that the £51 million was not unspent, lost to the housing budget or replaced by other money; it has been spent on housing.

Jim Hume: The minister goes on about a 26 per cent cut over a period, but I remember fighting a draft budget in Scotland when the Scottish Government wanted a 55 per cent cut. The cut was reduced to 41 per cent after the Lib Dems made the issue one of their priorities for supporting the budget.

I heard from members that the current level of affordable house building is still 40 per cent less than it was before 2008. Nevertheless, I want to be positive—as ever—and to make the point that we are seeing a shift in the quality of housing and not an exclusive focus on quantity, which is important. The minister pointed out that quality standards are being reinforced, which I welcome.

However, I am yet to receive a satisfactory answer from the Government to my question about the discrepancy between the success rates reported by social landlords to the Scottish Housing Regulator and the findings of the Scottish house condition survey. The Scottish Housing Regulator reports a 95 per cent success rate in registered social landlords meeting the Scottish housing quality standard, whereas the Scottish house condition survey reports that 43 per cent of social housing is failing to meet the quality standard.

In her response to me, the minister said that the discrepancy can be attributed to different methodologies in the two reports, but I do not quite buy that a 52 per cent discrepancy rate is simply the result of different methodologies or timing. Given that 39 per cent of households in Scotland—some 940,000 households, or almost a million, including around half of all rural households—are experiencing fuel poverty, it is extremely necessary that we tackle the problem.

Almost half of all households who rent in Scotland receive financial assistance to pay the rent, and for 39 per cent of households more than a third of household income goes on fuel. It is no surprise that people are fast becoming exasperated with timid performance on housing. WWF Scotland provided a context for thinking about our current housing conditions when it said:

“over 85% of homes standing today will still be lived in by 2050.”

I note that in June the Government committed to making improving the energy efficiency of Scotland's buildings a national infrastructure priority. I support that, of course, but given the Government's record on the emissions target—it has missed the target for the fourth time in a row—its promise is less than credible.

The Scottish Lib Dems have a strong record of delivering housing in Scotland, and we want to see a Scotland where homelessness is a thing of the past. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Jim Hume: We want to see a Scotland where we are able to use innovative and bold solutions to deliver the right, sustainable, long-term solutions. We know that 27,000 homes are sitting empty across Scotland. What are we doing to use those

to regenerate communities and boost the wellbeing of our economy? It is time to shift away from silo thinking when discussing housing.

I agree with other members that housing is of course the starting point for a healthy and stable life. However, the fact is that the Scottish Government was not totally truthful to the population when it announced an ambitious house building programme in 2011, because it has delivered less than that. The Government announced an ambitious house building programme today, but I am very wary of its reneging on its goals again and leaving 150,000 families on waiting lists even longer. I urge everybody to support my amendment.

16:30

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): There has been a fairly high degree of disagreement across the chamber over the course of the afternoon, but let me start with what I think is one area of agreement: all parties and all independent members believe that housing is a critical and vital issue. I think that it is beyond dispute that we face severe challenges across the housing sector. Families across Scotland are feeling that, and the sector and stakeholders feel it, too. I do not think that it is an exaggeration to describe the situation as a housing crisis.

Members have already quoted some of the figures, but they are worth repeating. According to the commission on housing and wellbeing, 150,000 households are currently waiting for social housing; 60,000 households are classed as overcrowded; and half of housing falls short of official quality standards. I can be objective enough to accept that that is not all down entirely to the fault of the current Scottish Government or, indeed, the previous Scottish Government or the UK Government before the first Scottish Executive. There are complex reasons for the challenges that we face, and complex solutions will be required in the short, medium and long term if we are to make a dent in the challenges, but particularly if we aim to solve the crisis. That will require a huge number of solutions.

Kenneth Gibson: Does the member think that the UK's cut of 26 per cent in capital allocation to the Scottish Government has helped or hindered its ability to deal with housing problems in Scotland?

Gavin Brown: I do not accept for a moment the SNP's arguments on the budget, which I will return to in just a moment. I will just finish off the consensus part. Mr Gibson obviously does not like consensus and wants to move on to bare-knuckle debate, and I am happy to do that too.

If we are going to solve the housing crisis in the long term, it will require an all-tenure approach, as stakeholders have pointed out. We all need to focus carefully on that point.

I think that it was courageous of the Scottish Government to bring forward this debate on housing, because the issue has been the Government's Achilles' heel over the past three or four years. It is not a comfortable area for the Government, and I think that there are aspects of it for which the Government is culpable.

The first one is this: the SNP made a manifesto commitment, and every SNP member here—and those SNP members who are not here—stood behind that manifesto commitment. We have heard it read out word for word. The manifesto commitment on page 17 of the 2011 SNP manifesto states:

"Overall, our aim is to build over 6,000 new socially-rented houses each year."

There is a clear commitment in black and white to 30,000 such houses, but the Government has not achieved and will not achieve that in the timeframe. It looks like the Government will get more than 20,000 built—maybe it has done so—but it is not going to get 30,000, which was the manifesto commitment. It does the Government's party and, indeed, this chamber no good at all to pretend that the commitment does not exist. The Government will fall short by 10,000: a third of the entire commitment.

To come back to Mr Gibson's point, we cannot blame Westminster for that failure. Housing is a devolved issue, so it is entirely a failure of the Scottish Government. When the manifesto commitment was made in 2011, the Government knew exactly how much money it had for each of the following four years. The Government made the commitment almost a year after the emergency budget and a good six or seven months after the full spending review, so that commitment was made knowing exactly what funding would be available.

The only difference since then is that funding has increased, so the failure is the Scottish Government's. It is a bit disappointing that, first, the SNP back benchers will not even acknowledge that there has been a failure and, secondly, they do not seem to want to know why that failure happened. Perhaps Mr Neil in his closing speech can tell us why the Government fell 10,000 short. If it cannot deliver on the smaller numbers, how seriously should we take its current pledge of a larger number of 50,000 new affordable homes?

We have heard again from the Scottish Government that its priority is to deal with housing. Mike MacKenzie says that there are few better investments—there are economic multipliers and

there are jobs; it ticks just about every box. However, that is the same Mike MacKenzie who, along with every other SNP member in this chamber, voted in successive budgets to make disproportionate cuts to housing.

We accept that there was an overall real-terms budget cut and an overall real-terms capital budget cut, but the political choice of the SNP—of this Government—was to put the lion's share of those capital cuts on to housing, not on to any other part of capital. The Government concentrated its cuts specifically on housing. That is one of the reasons why we voted against the budget in 2012, 2013 and 2014—we had an almost 40 per cent drop in the affordable housing budget over a four-year period.

Since then, of course, the budget has been increased, so the 2015-16 budget is back up and is close to the level of where it was, as funds have been added back in. However, the SNP members should acknowledge that all of them stood behind drastic budget cuts concentrated on housing. I do not remember a single SNP member, in any of those debates, raising a question about increasing the housing budget.

As regards what the Government can do, it cannot entirely control the private sector, and two thirds of the house builds are built by the private sector and not through Government funding. As regards some of the areas that the Government can influence and control, help to buy is a particularly good example. It was an innovative initiative, described initially by the Scottish Government as "funny money" but then, when the money was put to use, suddenly it was an innovative and wonderful way to deliver houses—as if we did not notice the metamorphosis.

The question I put to Margaret Burgess—and this is where I was disappointed—was simply this: when is the successor scheme to help to buy going to be operational? She said that she was going to answer the question shortly and quite simply did not. I hope that Alex Neil will be able to answer that question in his summing-up because the help to buy scheme has been closed to new entrants since 26 May, there was an announcement in September that something would be done at some point, and we are now into mid to late November and we do not know—almost six months after the scheme shut—when the successor scheme is going to be operational.

I ask simply: how are we going to get investor confidence if we have that stop-start mechanism? It is not the first time that such a thing has happened. Perhaps in closing the minister can tell us when the successor scheme to help to buy will be operational, as it has been south of the border from day 1 and continues to be.

16:38

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): As many members in the chamber will recognise, I am an optimist and I continue to live in hope despite many years in this Parliament, so when I heard that the Scottish Government had lodged a motion on housing, I looked forward to the debate with anticipation. When I read the wording of the motion, I was slightly disappointed. I was trying to work out why this was the ambitious house building programme referred to in the debate title when it seemed to be a rehash of much of the material that we have heard over many years in the Parliament.

Of course, what I discovered today when I saw the SNP press release is the real reason for this debate—apparently we are going to celebrate the Scottish Government meeting its housing target of 6,000 affordable homes per year. If I may say so—and as has emerged in the debate—there are at least two very good reasons why that is not a cause for celebration.

The first reason is that that was not the SNP promise. As Jim Hume and other members have mentioned, the SNP's 2011 manifesto specifically states on page 17:

“Overall, our aim is to build over 6,000 new socially-rented houses each year.”

It refers not to affordable homes but to socially rented homes, and there is a crucial difference, despite the fact that Mike MacKenzie does not seem to recognise it. A mid-market or affordable home in a place such as Aberdeen is not the same as socially rented accommodation. If, after all these years of listening to the people who come to his surgery, Mike MacKenzie thinks that there is a similarity, he is sadly mistaken. The distinction matters very much to people who are waiting to afford a home.

Secondly, and far more importantly, even a Government target for 6,000 affordable homes is not the same as meeting housing need. In fact, it is not even close. According to Shelter, the Chartered Institute of Housing and the SFHA, 6,000 affordable homes would make up just half of what is needed. The minister is effectively asking us to celebrate the fact that her policy will not deliver for half the people in Scotland who need a decent, warm, secure home.

The word “ambitious” features in the title of the Government's housing motion, but the debate has not been ambitious. In fact, we have heard from members in the chamber words such as “self-congratulatory” and “complacent”, and the debate has been a pat on the back from one SNP member to another.

The Government's housing policy does not even address existing need, let alone paint a picture of the kind of Scotland that we can aspire to.

John Mason: Will the member give way?

Ken Macintosh: I will give way in a second.

The only ambitious part of the motion is the last line, which refers to

“a further 50,000 affordable homes.”

As the minister and other members will know, Shelter, CIH and SFHA recently published an independent assessment of housing need in which they identify that we need 12,000 affordable homes each year over five years. My mathematics makes that 60,000 homes, rather than 50,000, over five years. I do not see how setting a target that fails to meet Scotland's needs by 10,000 homes is ambitious.

John Mason: My question is on that point. Would 60,000 homes fully meet housing need in Scotland?

Ken Macintosh: The point is that we should set our ambitions and targets at need, not below what we already recognise as need. At the very least, 60,000 should be a baseline for what we want. We should not aspire to a target such as 50,000 but set a baseline from which to go forward.

We have heard a number of thoughtful contributions to the debate—from John Mason, Joan McAlpine, Malcolm Chisholm, Clare Adamson and other members. However, a number of members, including Clare Adamson and John Mason, have questioned the situation, suggesting that the Government acknowledges the challenge that it faces and that there is no disagreement in the chamber on housing need.

The point is that there is disagreement in the chamber. The minister will not recognise that we are facing a housing crisis. I have challenged the minister and the cabinet secretary to recognise that and to use the word “crisis”, or even just to recognise that others consistently use the word to describe the situation that Scotland is experiencing at present, but they both refuse to do so.

I noticed that Mike MacKenzie, when he was challenged, also refused to acknowledge the crisis. He is willing to throw brickbats across the border as usual and say that there is a housing crisis in England, but he refuses to recognise that the same situation exists in Scotland. Does he not recognise that that view is blinkered?

Mike MacKenzie: I am sure that Mr Macintosh will agree with me that there is a similar but deeper and more urgent problem south of the border. That is beyond argument.

Ken Macintosh: Well, we are getting close. The problem here is “similar”, apparently, but is it a crisis? Yet again I did not hear that word from Mr MacKenzie.

I am not trying to say that the Labour Party was perfect in power, and Michael McMahon was not saying that either, despite accusations to the contrary. We are not trying to downplay the effects of the recession, but we point out that the SNP has been in power for eight years and that housing is entirely devolved.

The SNP Government has made decisions when in power specifically to cut housing. The accusation is often made that Labour has not followed up its actions at budget time, but on housing we very much did so. I was the Opposition spokesperson responding to John Swinney when he made the cuts. In 2012 and 2013, Labour specifically identified the housing budget, along with the college budget—those were the two big cuts—and named the funds that we would put there instead. We specifically identified those areas and said, “This is the wrong thing to do.” We put our money where our mouth is, but the SNP will not take responsibility for its actions.

Alex Johnstone pointed out that the SNP has not only cut the overall housing budget but specifically cut the housing association grant. The effect is that, as well as private rents going up, social rents have gone up. Housing association rents have gone up because the SNP cut the HAG levels. It had to unpick some of that and try to restore the grant, but there has been a direct effect. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Ken Macintosh: Fundamentally, this crisis is about a lack of supply. Philip Hogg from Homes for Scotland has made the point that most people in this country still aspire to owning their own home. The average house price in Scotland is now about five times the average income, so that is out of reach for many people, and particularly for families who are starting out in life. They cannot afford a home of their own. Therefore, young adults are ending up staying at home with their parents and overcrowding is on the increase—according to Shelter, 75,000 people are living in overcrowded accommodation. Further, 150,000 people are waiting for a housing association or council property that simply is not there.

Another result is that people are being forced into the private rented sector, which has doubled in the past 10 years alone and trebled since devolution began. For some, the private rented sector may be a life-saver and the solution, but for others the lack of regulation means that they never feel secure in their home. Of course, it also means a huge extra cost, because the average rent in the

private rented sector is 86 per cent more than that in social rented accommodation. Hotspots such as Aberdeen and Edinburgh are rapidly becoming unaffordable. About 312,000 households are privately renting in Scotland. The majority of them are young working adults, but there are about 80,000 families with children. That in itself might not cause worry, but the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has pointed out that

“The number of households in poverty in the private rented sector ... has doubled in the last decade”.

Again this afternoon, we have heard constant accusations from SNP members that Labour identifies the problems but does not propose solutions. However, we constantly propose solutions. Last year, we proposed the solution of intervening to control rapidly rising rents, but the SNP—rather than align with us, recognise the problem and introduce a living rent to match our commitment to a living wage—preferred to vote with the Conservatives and reject our proposals.

The problem is not limited to the private rented sector; it is across the board. The commission on housing and wellbeing, which was set up by Shelter, pointed out that we need to take a number of steps because poor housing affects the health, education, employability and life chances of people across Scotland. We need to build more homes of all tenures, but we particularly need to build social rented homes. Let us not celebrate building half the houses that we need and let us not set a new target that continues to fall short of Scotland’s needs; instead, let us be truly ambitious and actually build the homes that we want and give people the warm, decent and secure homes that they deserve.

16:48

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners’ Rights (Alex Neil): It is a great pity that Malcolm Chisholm is not still Labour’s shadow spokesman on housing, because he was the only member of the Labour Party who made any sense and, unlike his colleagues, he showed an understanding and deep knowledge of the housing sector.

Earlier today, I attended the housing joint delivery group with organisations such as the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Chartered Institute of Housing, Shelter, Homes for Scotland, the Existing Homes Alliance, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, tenants groups, the Scottish Association of Landlords and others. They were all extremely complimentary about the Scottish Government’s housing policy; indeed, one member who has been involved in housing for the past 30 years said that he had never seen a Government so committed to housing and in

particular to the building of a significant number of new houses.

Let me give the facts, because it is clear to me from the speeches of the spokespeople on the Tory benches to my left, the Tory benches to my right and the Tory bench behind them that they do not know or understand some of the basics about housing.

Let me start with the record. Between 2000 and 2006-07, the Labour-Liberal coalition Administration completed 28,988 social houses. During a comparable period, we have built 34,500. As has already been stated, the coalition built a total of six council houses; we have built a total of nearly 5,400 council houses. The completions that the coalition made from 2000 to 2007 totalled 9,000. Since we came to Government, ours have totalled 15,300.

If members look at the expenditure, they will see that our expenditure is 50 per cent higher than that of the previous Administration. I do not take it seriously when members in the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party who supported that previous Administration try to lecture us about housing.

Jim Hume: Will the member give way?

Alex Neil: I will later.

I certainly do not take seriously the Tories, the Liberals or Alistair Darling's party, since they are the ones who have cut the budget for housing that is available to the Scottish Government, through the massive cuts to our budget.

Alex Johnstone: Will the member give way?

Alex Neil: I will later.

The right to buy destroyed the social housing sector in Scotland. During its period in office, the Lib-Lab coalition sold off thousands of houses and did nothing to put an end to right to buy. Now the Labour Party and the Liberals sanctimoniously tell us that we have not got it right, when in fact this Government has ended right to buy, which has been called for for many years—indeed, ever since this Parliament was set up. We have done what the Labour Party and the Liberals utterly failed to do.

When Alex Johnstone refers to council housing, he does not seem to realise that we subsidise council housing to the tune of £46,000 on average per unit. Without that subsidy, the councils could not build the 5,500 council houses that they have already built.

Alex Johnstone: Councils have been forced further into debt in order for that to be achieved. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order!

Alex Johnstone: The cabinet secretary knew what the budget was before he set the previous target. He missed that target, by our definition, and he has now set a target for 50,000 in the next parliamentary session, should his party be elected. How many of those 50,000 houses will be for social rent and, secondly, how many of them are conditional on George Osborne giving him the money?

Alex Neil: If interventions are going to be that long, I will not be able to take many.

Under every Administration since the first world war, council housing has been funded through the Public Works Loans Board, very often without any subsidy to councils. We provided a subsidy that Alex Johnstone clearly did not know about, which is why we have 5,500 council houses being built. Under every one of the other three parties we had no new council houses in the past 20 years.

I appreciate Paul Martin's seriousness on empty homes. However, at a conference on empty homes yesterday, George Clarke, who is an expert in the policy area, praised the Scottish Government for its initiative on empty homes. That is another first: until we came to power, there had been no initiative on empty homes whatsoever. We are putting in substantial money. For example, we have the town centre empty homes fund, which has been extremely successful. Paul Martin did not mention that—I do not know whether he knows about the fund—but it has been very successful.

We are not only funding Shelter to help put in place strategies with local authorities, but putting real money into converting empty properties to be used as housing in town centres.

Paul Martin: Does the minister agree with John Mason's statement that the housing association grant reduction was a good thing because it forced the housing associations to use their reserves?

Alex Neil: John Mason's point was that, at one point in the past few years, the housing associations had collective reserves of well over £300 million so it was perfectly reasonable that at least some of those reserves—not all of them—were put to use to help to fund new projects. John Mason quoted one of the projects that did not require any Scottish Government subsidy whatsoever. That is perfectly reasonable and the housing associations thought that it was perfectly reasonable.

I will put Gavin Brown out of his misery. We can confirm that the successor programme to help to buy will run operationally for three years from April 2016 until 2019, and will have total funding of £195 million. We intend that that fund will help people who are on the lower income scale to get on the housing ladder and to fulfil their ambition to buy a home for themselves. That is a real success

story and, if I may say so, the evidence shows that, the first iteration of the help-to-buy programme in Scotland was more successful than the programme south of the border.

Gavin Brown: I thank the minister for giving way and for that news. Does that mean that help to buy was closed for business from 26 May this year and that it will not reopen until April next year? In effect, it will have been closed for about 11 months.

Alex Neil: No; it is not closed for business. We have a dedicated scheme for small builders, the total for which is about £30 million. That has been extremely active and taken up and is particularly aimed at helping small companies in the sector. If Opposition members read the facts about the housing policy that we are implementing, they would not need to ask such questions.

Looking forward, no Government has ever gone as far as this Government in committing ourselves to build 50,000 houses during the next five years. Let me make two points in response to some of the nonsense that I have heard from Opposition parties. First, we deliberately set the target for completions because that is a far tougher target than starts or approvals. By definition, we have to complete the house, which takes longer than starting the housing, laying a foundation or getting approval. We set ourselves a tougher target, not an easier one.

Secondly, members have referred to “the Shelter report” but there have been two reports. The first report, by Robert Black, said that we needed a total of 23,000 new houses a year across all tenures, including owner occupied, and that, out of that, we needed 10,000 new houses a year. The second report, which was prepared by the CIH and supported by Shelter, raised that figure to 12,000. We have said that we are absolutely committed to the figure of 50,000. Depending on the nature of the settlement that we get, we will try to stretch the money further and go further, but if our budget is ripped apart in the way that it has been in recent years, that will be very difficult indeed to do. I am sure that John Swinney will be able to enlighten us about the precise numbers on 16 December.

Let us look forward. I think that Malcolm Chisholm said absolutely the right thing in his speech. One point on which everybody is united is the future demand for housing, and three major factors will influence that demand. One factor is the population rising to record levels because so many people want to come and live in an SNP-run Scotland; the second is the backlog in council house waiting lists; and the third is the on-going trend of lower occupation per house.

We accept that there is a need to work across every tenure, type of house, size of house and location. That is what we are doing, and that is why our housing record is easily the best since the Parliament was established.

Business Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-14864, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 24 November 2015

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Violence Against Women, 16 Days of Activism

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 25 November 2015

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Culture, Europe and External Affairs;
Infrastructure, Investment and Cities

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 26 November 2015

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Welfare Reform Committee Debate:
Women and Social Security

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 1 December 2015

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 2 December 2015

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Education and Lifelong Learning

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 3 December 2015

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S4M-14866 to S4M-14869, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out stage 1 and 2 timetables for various bills.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 5 February 2016.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Succession (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 11 December 2015.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Lobbying (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 8 January 2016.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Apologies (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 11 December 2015.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move en bloc motions S4M-14870 to S4M-14873, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Private Rented Housing Panel (Landlord Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Tribunals (Administrative Support for Listed Tribunals) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Tribunals (Listed Tribunals) Regulations 2015 [draft] be approved.—
[Joe FitzPatrick.]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, if the amendment in the name of Ken Macintosh is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Alex Johnstone and Jim Hume fall.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-14859.3, in the name of Ken Macintosh, which seeks to amend motion S4M-14859, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on an ambitious housing programme for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)

Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 34, Against 78, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Alex Johnstone is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Jim Hume falls.

The next question is, that amendment S4M-14859.2, in the name of Alex Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-14859, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on an ambitious housing programme for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)

Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 15, Against 95, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-14859.1, in the name of Jim Hume, which seeks to amend motion S4M-14859, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on an ambitious housing programme for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 50, Against 58, Abstentions 4.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-14859, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on an ambitious house building programme for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)

White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 58, Against 54, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that housing helps promote social justice, strengthens communities and tackles inequality as well as being good for the economy; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to providing access to good quality housing and recognises that it is a high priority for the current administration; commends the Scottish Government for being on course to exceed its five-year target of delivering 30,000 affordable homes by March 2016, including 20,000 social rented

homes; acknowledges this achievement being made despite the drastic reduction in capital budgets as a result of the UK Government's spending cuts; further recognises that the Scottish Government started a new generation of council house building, has abolished the right to buy and is leading the way in the UK in financial innovation for housing; notes that Scotland continues to outperform other parts of the UK in housing completions, and welcomes the Scottish Government's future ambition to build a further 50,000 affordable homes for people across Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to put a single question on motions S4M-14870 to S4M-14873, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments. If any member objects to a single question being put, they should say so now.

The question is, that motions S4M-14870 to S4M-14873, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on the approval of SSIs, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Motions agreed to

That the Parliament agrees that the Courts Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential and Supplemental Provisions) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Private Rented Housing Panel (Landlord Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Tribunals (Administrative Support for Listed Tribunals) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scottish Tribunals (Listed Tribunals) Regulations 2015 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time. Members who are leaving the chamber should do so quickly and quietly.

Air Pollution

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-14433, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on air pollution in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with concern statistics published by Friends of the Earth Scotland that suggest that more than 3,500 people in Scotland die early because of exposure to toxic emissions and that highlight the cost of these emissions, their environmental justice impact and the fact that they are believed to cost up to £2 billion to Scotland's economy; is further concerned at the admission by Volkswagen Automobile Group that its diesel vehicles were fitted with "defeat devices" to produce favourable emission test results; notes the view that the results of other manufacturers' models might require investigation; understands that European air quality legal limits continue to be breached in Scotland and that 32 air-quality management areas declared by local authorities, including sites in Edinburgh, are in breach of regulatory standards; believes that the Supreme Court's determination that new air-quality plans should be devised before the end of 2015 to ensure that Scotland can comply with EU law is significant; welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to achieving binding European air-quality legal limits by 2020 through the delivery of its low emission strategy, and notes the view that a new policy focus and funding will be required for the Scottish Government to achieve its stated ambition for the strategy and to deliver low emission zones where air-quality management areas are currently in place.

17:08

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): I thank my colleagues for signing my motion and enabling tonight's debate. I also thank the organisations, such as Friends of the Earth Scotland, Sustrans, the British Heart Foundation and Transform Scotland, that joined forces to give us such an excellent briefing for tonight.

More than 2,000 people die early deaths every year in Scotland as a result of traffic-related air pollution. There is also an impact on people's health, on children, on older people and on those who have chronic conditions. The cocktail of emissions can lead to cancer, increased risk of heart attacks, angina and impacts on respiratory health. We lose days at work and we cost our national health service more than £1 billion every year.

The reality is that we are missing the European Union ambient air quality directive targets, and we are failing to meet our own Scottish standards in 32 local air quality management areas. We need to act. We had failed to act by 2010, so we got an extension from the EU until 2015. We need urgent action and all of us across the chamber need to sign up to action. That action will bring big

benefits: better public health, more attractive and safer streets and a reduction in climate emissions. That must be good for us.

The strategy "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" has some good ideas in it but it is not sufficiently ambitious in its timescale, and that is where I will focus my remarks. It is great that we aspire to have the cleanest air in Europe, but we should deliver on that ambition faster. We need to urgently target the areas where we have failure and, crucially, where we are likely to have failure in the future.

That means that we need action by the Scottish Government, our local authorities and our regional transport partnerships. They must work together with the financial resource from the Scottish Government. There are also legislative issues that we could address. For example, if we put in place bus regulation, we would be able to limit emissions from vehicles—particularly those that travelled through low-emission zones. We need a joined-up approach.

Good work is taking place in cities and towns across Scotland, but I fervently believe that we must ramp up that action throughout the country. That must involve a modal shift in our travel, more walking and cycling and more attractive and better-quality public transport routes. That would give us a double health benefit. More walking and cycling would be good not just for air quality areas but for our health as well, through increased physical activity. That goes back to the need for cleaner and safer streets, a more attractive environment and better infrastructure.

I mentioned bus regulation. If we had low-emission zones and low-emission buses, that would begin to tackle areas with poor air quality. However, we must analyse the failures in all those air quality management areas to see what the short-term wins might be. We should not wait until 2018 before we have low-emission zones; we should look now for early wins.

We also need to start work on other issues, such as more adoption of electric vehicles and vehicles that are powered by alternative fuels such as hydrogen and liquid petroleum gas. We need to think about changing our cars, taxis, buses and delivery vehicles. I accept that that is a big challenge—I am sure that the transport minister will say that it will take time—but, if we put that ambition centre stage, we can get going on it.

My motion mentions the issue of Volkswagen, which was topical when I lodged the motion. We must ensure that the companies that produce such vehicles deliver what they say on the tin. Vehicles that companies and people buy should meet the low-emission standards that the manufacturers advertise.

We need not only action across the public sector but the engagement of the private sector. I would like to see planning now with the logistics industry, so that it has the confidence to invest in alternatives to diesel vehicles, and there are clear areas where we need different choices to be made now. I would particularly like the long-distance freight and haulage industries to come together with city businesses and the retail industry to consider how those changes might be planned for. The public sector must lead the way with low-emission zones, but there will also have to be a response from private sector interests, which need to come to the table now.

We need a more ambitious timetable for low-emission zones, and we must concentrate everybody's minds. The minute that something is three years away, it is in the "tomorrow" box. This initiative needs to be in the "now" box and we must tie it to Scottish air quality regulations. If the whole of Dundee and Perth were in an air quality management area, that would really concentrate the mind. Edinburgh has five zones—we know where those areas are and we need to act.

Our big cities need support now to get the infrastructure in place and a faster timetable for action on funding and action on low-emission zones. We also need to know how compliance with the new standard for fine particles will be monitored and delivered. At the moment, across Scotland, there are only six stations for monitoring fine particles.

I would like to see more planning policy and guidance actioned now. That must be done within the year. We do not need more new developments making the situation worse; we have to start the change now. This is not a future problem; we need to plan in new walking, cycling and public transport networks, car clubs, electric charging infrastructure and all the new developments from day 1, not in the next five years.

We know what needs to be done and we must get on with it. We need the political will, across the chamber, to do that and we need leadership from the Scottish Government. People are dying needlessly, and—if nothing else—we owe it to them and their families to get on with that action and not leave this as a future challenge.

17:14

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): I thank Sarah Boyack for securing the debate. The west of Edinburgh has four main commuter routes into the city: Queensferry Road, St John's Road, Calder Road and Lanark Road. Two of those arterial routes—the A70 and the A71—are in my constituency.

At the evening peak, between 4.30 and 6.30, Calder Road is the biggest car park in the west of the city. Communities along that route—from Stenhouse, past Saughton Mains, Parkhead, Broomhouse, Sighthill and the Calders—have mile after mile of traffic crawling along in second gear as commuters try to leave the city. The residents have to put up with the road noise and the difficulty of travelling the Calder Road to get to their homes. Furthermore, anyone who lives along that route has to contend with the exhaust fumes that are pumped out by thousands of cars over a relatively short period.

The situation will only get worse as more than 6,000 homes are to be built in the east of the West Lothian Council area at Calderwood, Broxburn and Winchburgh. Those areas are all easily commutable into Edinburgh by car along roads that are heavily congested.

The other route that is in my constituency—Lanark Road—has the communities of Juniper Green, Currie and Balerno along its route. At the morning peak, traffic queues back from the Gillespie crossroads through Juniper Green to the outskirts of Currie. Although they do not yet have the same level of congestion or air quality problems as the Calder Road area has, the communities there are under siege from developers.

Over the past few years, the communities have faced applications for house building at Ravelrig, Curriehill, Riccarton Mains, Curriemuir park, Muir Wood, Harlaw Gait, Cockburn Crescent, Goodtrees farm and Glenbrook. More than 1,800 new homes have been proposed along a piece of road 4 miles long that handles queues of 1 mile in length every morning, with the potential of more and more car owners adding to long queues.

On top of that, there are two proposals in and around Heriot-Watt University that would maroon the university in a sea of homes and make future expansion virtually impossible for the institution. Edinburgh's garden district is a new district housing plan for 3,500 homes to the east of the university, next to the bypass. Although the council rejected the plan, phase 1 could still be built in my colleague Colin Keir's constituency of Edinburgh Western. Wallace Land proposes a 1,500-house development to the west of the university, north of Curriehill station.

If all the developments are given the go-ahead, a small area of mainly arable land will host nearly 8,000 homes on top of those that are being built in West Lothian. They will all be commutable into Edinburgh along the A70 and the A71 in my constituency.

The City of Edinburgh Council issued a revised air quality action plan in August that highlights

trams, buses and electric vehicles as a solution. The problem is that the trams only skirt my constituency at Broomhouse, buses will not resolve the situation as Lanark Road has no room for a greenway to encourage bus use and electric vehicles are not yet affordable for many families.

The only way in which we can address poor air quality for communities in my area is to draw to a halt further development in the green belt, improve the railway line from Edinburgh to Glasgow via Shotts and encourage house building along that route, in addition to the new houses that are being built along the Borders railway. The alternative for communities in the west of Edinburgh is to face more traffic, which reduces the quality of life for my constituents. The city will then grind to a halt.

Linking planning policy to transport needs across the development plan areas is the only way in which we can alleviate poor air quality in our cities. We need to act now before the EU imposes fines for failure to deliver reductions in air pollution.

17:19

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank my colleague Sarah Boyack for bringing this significant issue to the chamber and for her focused and comprehensive analysis.

Until a person sees an old banger lurching down the street, air quality is out of sight and out of mind, unless they happen to live under its pall. Sarah Boyack said that the issue is a moral and public health one. The Scottish Government cannot delay action or its work with other partners, because any delay means more people breathing harmful and sometimes carcinogenic air every day.

People might hope that living outside our big cities would relieve them from concern about air pollution, and in many cases congested urban areas do have the most dangerous air quality levels. As Sarah Boyack said, it is disturbing that entire cities exceed the Scottish standards for air pollution. However, the air quality management areas that local authorities are declaring are not exclusively in our big cities. Musselburgh's High Street has excessive levels of nitrogen dioxide despite its distance from Edinburgh and its seaside location, and the residents of Lanark in my region have concerns about traffic pollution in the closes that are connected to the High Street. They are considering taking small actions such as introducing pollutant-eating plants, as research suggests that this natural resource can make a worthwhile contribution.

Increased active travel will make a significant contribution to making air cleaner for urban dwellers and road users, and the range of

initiatives to improve safety such as the possibility of presumed liability, road user education and appropriate infrastructure are essential, as is the recent Community Links plus award, but the Scottish Government's planning review must also address clean air. We are planning new communities across Scotland, so this cannot wait.

I welcome the strategy "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future" and the steps that it contains to enable us to stay within the European limits. The Parliament will be aware that our Scottish regulation sets stricter standards for coarse particles, but I am concerned to know whether the Scottish Government will meet those more ambitious targets and commit to meeting its regulatory standards. Furthermore, the strategy lacks any hint of the expected reduction in polluting components. If the Scottish Government strengthened the strategy by including estimates of each planned improvement to air quality, people in the most affected zones could put their faith in it. Not only are such predictions a legal requirement, their omission makes it difficult to monitor any progress.

I thank the various groups that contributed to the briefing for this important debate, including the British Heart Foundation Scotland; Sustrans, which provided information on active travel; and Friends of the Earth Scotland, which has made a big commitment to campaigning for better air quality in Scotland. The statistics that they have shared regarding the relationship between the air that we breathe and our health are bracing. As we have heard from other speakers, links have been made to cancer, coronary events and respiratory health problems, and some research has even made a link to restricted foetal growth. All those breathing issues are dangerous to children, with so much asthma in Scotland today, and also to the elderly and the sick.

It is estimated that, given the lost work days and the cost to the national health service, air pollution costs Scotland £1.1 billion a year.

By 2015, urban air pollution is set to overtake dirty water and lack of sanitation to become the top environmental cause of mortality worldwide.

Local authorities are tasked with the job of cleaning the air that we breathe, but I am concerned that there is no new commitment to funding, as I understand it. The task is not a simple one, so it is imperative that the Scottish Government fully supports our local authorities, particularly when it comes to the implementation of low-emission zones. Those should be prioritised and all levels of the state need to work together on them.

We all have a right to clean air. Poor air quality affects every one of us, but it hurts those who are

already disadvantaged more. It is for that reason that Scottish Labour has expanded the concept of environment in our brief to environmental justice. We must all work together across the Parliament to ensure that enough action is taken.

17:23

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I, too, congratulate Sarah Boyack on securing the debate. I recognise her long-standing interest in this subject. I thank those organisations that provided the briefing for the debate, including BHF Scotland and Friends of the Earth Scotland.

The Scottish Conservatives share the concerns about our air quality levels, which are too low and are in breach of European Union air quality limits in too many areas. As a sufferer from a respiratory condition called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, I am very conscious of the impact that polluted air can have on people with breathing conditions. It can be terrifying.

The BHF briefing highlights the harm that air pollution causes to the many Scots who have cardiovascular disease, and the BHF is to be commended for investing, since 2010, £6.9 million in medical research to help us to better understand the link between air pollution and cardiovascular disease.

The majority of air quality management areas are in urban areas of the central belt, but I am aware of one in force in my region to deal with parts of Inverness city centre around Queensgate and Academy Street that are affected by excessively high nitrogen dioxide levels.

A shocking statistic that has already been mentioned is that more than 3,500 people in Scotland die prematurely each year because of air pollution and exposure to toxic emissions, and it is also estimated that air pollution in the United Kingdom reduces the life expectancy of every single person by an average of seven to eight months. We must all agree, then, that tackling this has to be a policy priority. In addition to the early deaths, our national health service faces significant extra costs as a result of air pollution exacerbating respiratory and other health conditions; indeed, a figure of around £2 billion per annum has been suggested.

It is clearly vital that we further promote user-friendly, reliable and affordable public transport options, as well as walking and cycling, as alternatives to private car use in urban areas, and we must also ensure that every effort is made to relieve road congestion to enable traffic to flow much more smoothly. After all, vehicles stuck in traffic jams contribute greatly to air pollution. The development of more modern, lower-emissions vehicles will therefore continue to be important.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to welcome the introduction of a new electric bus on Orkney as a result of support from the Scottish green bus fund, a development that Orkney Islands Council said was a great demonstration of the council's commitment to reducing the consumption of fossil fuels.

Planting more trees and shrubs in urban areas also has a role to play, as it reduces ground-level ozone. Indeed, that approach has been the subject of a recent interesting academic report from the United States of America entitled "Tree and forest effects on air quality and human health in the United States".

Sarah Boyack's motion rightly refers to the recent scandal arising from Volkswagen's admission of manipulated emissions test results. The UK Government is to be commended for moving swiftly to launch an investigation into the extent of the practice and for widening its probe to look at whether the illegal software used by VW is being used elsewhere. Indeed, the UK Government has for some time now been pressing for action at EU level to improve emissions tests, and it will continue to do so.

Today's debate is welcome, and we look to ministers working closely with our local authorities and other organisations on implementing practical and effective new air quality plans, as required by the Supreme Court's determination.

17:27

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I thank Sarah Boyack for bringing this important debate to the chamber this evening. I, too, thank Friends of the Earth, Sustrans, Transform Scotland and the British Heart Foundation for their very useful briefing.

Sadly, our much-heralded Scottish fresh air is not always as fresh as we might think or wish—sometimes noticeably so, particularly in national air pollution hotspots such as St John's Road and Queensferry Road in Edinburgh. However, even at levels below current Scottish pollution standards, our health is still being damaged. While we debate the shortage of general practitioners, the impact of bedblocking and the need for our local authorities to have sufficient funding to implement health and social care integration, we need to start looking at how decisions taken in other policy areas, such as planning and transport, are impacting on our health. As a result, I will focus in my speech on the impact of the Government's transport policies on air pollution and where change is needed.

In 2014, Transform Scotland published "Warning Signs 2014: Is Scotland moving towards sustainable transport?", which sets out just how is Scotland moving about. According to the report,

65 per cent of journeys are made in cars, most of which have one passenger; 23 per cent by walking; 9 per cent by bus; 2 per cent by rail; and 1 per cent by bike. However, it was not always like that. In 1985, more trips were completed on foot than by car—the figures were 43 per cent and 39 per cent—and it was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that things began to change and we had the situation that has remained in place ever since.

While our climate change emissions have declined by 34 per cent in recent years, our transport emissions have declined by 1 or 2 per cent, and they make up 25 per cent of all climate change emissions. Transport emissions contribute to climate change and also pollute our air and damage our health.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has announced that air pollution and, in particular, particulate matter are carcinogenic—or cancer causing—to humans. Professor David Newby of the British Heart Foundation centre of research excellence in the city of Edinburgh has said:

“In the 1950s, when there was a lot of smog, the problem used to be that particles were big and they stuck in the upper airways. Now these nanoparticles go straight past, deep into the lungs, even into the bloodstream. We have a clear link between air pollution levels and heart attacks, and we believe the particles in the air are the cause of this.”

When I visited the centre recently with MP colleagues from Labour and the Scottish National Party, Professor Newby told us of the links between air pollution and heart attacks and the high likelihood that those who have suffered such attacks will have sat in heavy traffic in the hours that led up to that episode.

The European Environment Agency showed in its report on air quality in Europe that more than 90 per cent of people in European cities breathe air that is dangerous to their health. We know that children, the elderly and the sick are disproportionately affected by air pollution. That is not being addressed by the Government's transport policies in Scotland or by our local authorities. If it were being addressed, we would not have 32 local air quality management areas in which air pollution levels are dangerously high. I welcome the fact that we have a cleaner air for Scotland strategy, but does it have the teeth to make a difference?

The Government claims that it will promote a modal shift away from cars through walking and cycling among other policies, but more has been spent on trunk roads and motorways and less has been spent on maintenance than ever before. If the minister wants to boost the local economy and prevent damage to cars and cyclists, shovel-ready potholes can be found across Lothian and across

the country. Transform Scotland is right in calling on local and national Government to focus on a fix-it-first policy.

I would like the Government to invest in affordable bus and rail services, low-emission zones, and greener buses and taxis; to incentivise shared car use; to get freight off our roads where possible; to increase workplace parking levies; to protect and enhance our green spaces; to introduce presumed liability; and to invest more than 2 per cent of the £2 billion transport budget in walking and cycling. Green Party policy, in line with the views of the Association of Directors of Public Health, the Institute of Highway Engineers and the British Heart Foundation, is that 10 per cent of the budget is required to deliver the shift that we need to see for clean air for all.

The Government has five years to deliver its vision of 10 per cent of all journeys by bike. If the minister is serious about that, he will need to start pedalling a lot faster.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Doubtless we will hear about that.

17:32

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I am grateful to Sarah Boyack for bringing the important issue of air pollution in Scotland to the chamber for debate.

Air pollution and the improvement of air quality should undoubtedly be of the utmost importance and concern to both the Parliament and the Scottish Government. The detrimental effects of poor air quality are well documented and have been described by the British Medical Association as

“a major challenge to human health.”

In the light of that challenge, I very much welcome the Scottish Government's cleaner air for Scotland initiative as an appropriate step towards achieving its stated goals of reducing air pollution and improving human health.

As we know, Scotland's on-going efforts to curb air pollution are represented in its 32 air quality management areas, which seek to lower emissions in areas that exceed regulatory standards. One such AQMA is located in my constituency, where emissions of sulphur dioxide from the Grangemouth petrochemical plant have resulted in an AQMA that is set to reach a decade old this month. I have previously expressed my frustration with the pollution surrounding that site but, thankfully, due to the co-operation of the Petroineos Manufacturing Scotland Ltd refinery, sulphur emissions have declined, and there have been no breaches of the AQMA objectives since a tail-gas unit that was designed to increase sulphur

recovery was installed at the refinery in 2013 at a cost of approximately £70 million. Therefore, breaches have not been recorded in all 32 AQMAs, as Sarah Boyack suggested earlier. That was a prime example of partnership working. The installation of the tail gas unit has successfully addressed air pollution. Petroineos worked with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and Falkirk Council to find a solution.

Although the positive trend in Grangemouth is encouraging, it is still important to address the emissions from energy-related sources and the contribution that they make to air pollution. For example, 79.4 per cent of sulphur dioxide emissions emanate from energy industries, as is the case in my constituency, but the national low emissions framework that is proposed in "Cleaner Air for Scotland: The Road to a Healthier Future"

"will apply only to local authorities where transport is the main contributor to air quality problems."

Therefore, although the Government's action in thoroughly addressing transport-related emissions, which are certainly a large contributor to pollution, is laudable, the issue of AQMAs that are declared for emissions that do not stem from transport-related sources also needs attention.

Specifically, if the Government is to be successful in making significant progress towards the revocation of all AQMAs by 2020, it will have to expand its actions for change beyond the scope of implementing the national low emissions framework. I look forward to the Government's introduction of the proposals that will stem from a comprehensive review of the local air quality management system, which is due to take place in 2016.

A promising aspect of the cleaner air for Scotland initiative is the desire of the CAFS governance group to combine air quality and climate change policies in order to achieve Scotland's renewable energy targets while improving air quality. The initiative rightly points out that air pollution often originates from activities that contribute to climate change and, in the cases in which those two policies do not naturally coincide, the strategy aims to ensure that they are not at odds.

My constituency may have a role to play in achieving that goal, as Grangemouth's place in Scotland's renewable energy future could feature a carbon capture and storage plant. The idea of such a plant is currently undergoing research and feasibility studies. Summit Power's proposed Captain Clean Energy plant in Grangemouth would deliver low-carbon energy and very low levels of air pollutants. As such, it would be an

example of a plant that would jointly benefit climate change and air quality policies.

The minister's vision of Scotland's air quality becoming the best in Europe is an admirable goal and one that Scotland should certainly strive towards. In launching Scotland's first distinct air quality strategy, the Government has demonstrated its commitment to take seriously the health hazards that are posed by air pollution, and to pursue the substantial benefits that Scotland stands to gain from cleaner air. As the Government pursues other policies across its agenda, I urge ministers and Government officials to keep in mind the goals that are laid out in the initiative, and to work to achieve them in conjunction with their own policies. Clean air should be an innate right for all Scots, and providing it is a commendable goal of this Government.

As a Volkswagen owner and a former Volkswagen Audi enthusiast, I had hoped to touch on the Volkswagen fiasco—that is not the name of a new model that the company is planning to launch—but I am afraid that time has run out. However, I am keen to hear what response ministers have received from their UK counterparts in relation to their calls for a co-ordinated response on the Volkswagen emissions scandal. I look forward to hearing what the minister has to say.

17:38

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): Good afternoon, Presiding Officer. I thank Sarah Boyack for securing this debate on air pollution in Scotland, and I look forward to its outcome.

Air pollution and the environment used to be the Green Party's baby, but not any more. The general public and, more important, our children are very interested in the world that we live in. Air pollution in Scotland is not being successfully dealt with, because Scotland keeps breaching the European air quality legal limits. I ask the Government to tell me what I can say to my constituents and our young about what it is doing to fix that trend. What plans will be implemented that have not yet been deployed? What moneys will be available, particularly to local authorities, to support delivery of the Government's policy? What additional public transport is planned to help to reduce toxic emissions?

We in Scotland must address toxic emissions. We should force rogue car manufacturers to pay compensation not only to the owners of the vehicles in question, but to the Governments that have been affected—ours included. Some people might say that that is a bit unfair, but I do not agree. If car manufacturers are guilty they should

pay for the profits that they have made from their deception. I also think that Volkswagen is not the only manufacturer involved. I understand that several other manufacturers are being investigated as I speak.

Most important, we in Scotland should continue the good work that our schools are doing, by working with children and parents to increase awareness. Such work is paying huge dividends. I see it in my own house; I am impressed by how aware of the issues my grandchildren are. I was not so educated about such matters. I am regularly corrected on how I dispose of refuse, and my grandson regularly tells me to switch off the car engine when we are waiting for someone. Those are small things that all add up and affect our environment. The sooner we get to the grips with that, the better.

The Scottish National Party Government must improve the quality of citizens' lives, and I genuinely wish it every success in doing so, because that will benefit us all. The Government has perhaps sometimes let itself down by not pursuing the issue more vigorously. It is not just the Government but all of us who are guilty of taking our eye off the ball.

I am impressed by how much more aware our young people are than I was in my time. I am even more impressed by how much they care about the world in which they live. They are worried about what will happen to their environment and they want us to do more for them. I was discussing the motion at home last night and I said that I was not going to speak in the debate, but my grandson said, "Granddad, you have to." I am fulfilling that obligation. I wish the Government well.

17:42

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I congratulate Sarah Boyack on bringing this important subject to the Parliament, and I join her in expressing deep concern at the figures that Friends of the Earth highlighted.

Poor air quality can have devastating health consequences, and high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter are particularly problematic. James Cant, the director of British Heart Foundation Scotland, said recently:

"Our research has continuously shown that levels of air pollution can shorten people's lives and increase their risk of heart disease and stroke".

The problem in Scotland is clear for all to see. As many members said, Scotland has been breaking the European Union's ambient air quality directive, particularly in relation to nitrogen dioxide, small particulate matter, or PM10, and fine particulate matter, or PM2.5. We know the consequences of that for health; we also know that

to a large extent the cause is road traffic emissions.

If we want to find out what is happening in my city, we can turn to a report to City of Edinburgh Council's transport and environment committee, dated 25 August 2015. Such reviews of air quality are required under the Environment Act 1995—I remember participating in the process for what is a good piece of legislation from a previous Conservative Government; I do not often say that, but there, I have just said it.

There are five air quality management areas in this city—by "this city", I mean Edinburgh and Leith. It is important to include Leith, because, unfortunately, one of the zones is in Leith; it is centred on Great Junction Street but extends to Commercial Street and Bernard Street. There is nitrogen dioxide monitoring in Duke Street, almost as if the problem is expected to increase because of changes to traffic arrangements in Leith Walk. There is also an air quality management area covering Inverleith, which is not so well known.

The report to which I referred also says that PM10 is a particular problem in Salamander Street in Leith, stating:

"Should measured levels of PM10 in 2015 not reduce in line with the current trend, an"

air quality management area

"will be necessary at Salamander Street."

I very much agree with what Sarah Boyack's motion says about "low emission zones" being necessary

"where air-quality management areas are currently in place."

I am also minded to support the proposal from Friends of the Earth today that we should ban the more polluting vehicles from such zones. Heavy goods vehicles are a bit of a problem, but so are old diesel buses—that is perhaps not so well known. We must replace older buses or upgrade them with cleaner engine technology. In fact, we must ensure that we deploy the best buses on roads that pass through air quality management areas.

I have two final points, one of which is that the issue related to Volkswagen and other cars needs to be investigated more widely by improved emissions tests. Finally, there is the tram. The City of Edinburgh Council has a big decision on the tram tomorrow. If the tram goes to Leith, that will clearly help with air quality there. I believe that the tram will have to go to Leith anyway in due course, not least to widen the customer base for financial reasons.

I take this opportunity to say that I was wrongly quoted in *The National* last Thursday. I am not

often quoted in *The National*, but I appeared there because a journalist, through no fault of his own, lifted a quotation from the *Edinburgh Evening News* website that were words spoken by Colin Howden but attributed to me. The minister will therefore be reassured to know that I do not believe that the investment in the trams should be a priority for Scottish Government investment—that was Colin Howden's view. I thought that I should take this opportunity to say that because I know that certain members of the party opposite read *The National* from time to time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That sets the record straight. I now call on the Minister for Transport and Islands, Derek Mackay, to close on behalf of the Government—seven minutes, or thereby, please.

17:46

The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay): I start by saying that I feel Malcolm Chisholm's pain at being badly treated by the press. Sometimes a right to reply on our own record is not achieved—never mind addressing the issue around misquoting.

I challenge Hanzala Malik on the question of whether green issues are solely the concern of the Green Party. No, they are not; I think that they can be shared by all. A personal revelation for members is that I probably came into politics because of the issue of air quality. My involvement at the age of 13 in a campaign against a toxic waste incinerator in my home town in Renfrew first got me into politics. That is an example of linkages and a reflection of the enthusiasm of youth. I am delighted to do my bit now as transport minister on the very significant and serious issue of air quality.

I, too, congratulate Sarah Boyack on bringing the motion and the debate to the chamber. It is of course quite timely, because just two weeks ago our Government launched its "Cleaner Air for Scotland" strategy at the third annual Scottish transport emissions partnership conference. Of course, it is Dr Aileen McLeod who leads as minister on the issue of the environment, but transport has a very important role. I suppose that reflects the fact that the issue crosses many Government portfolios and that they all contribute to addressing it.

It is important to reflect that there have been reductions in certain harmful emissions. I do not say that out of complacency; I say it because we learn lessons from how we achieve progress in certain areas. Angus MacDonald was right to touch on the industrial issues, although they were more issues in the past. Tougher and tighter industrial regulations, improved fuel quality, cleaner vehicles and an increased focus on

sustainable transport have made a difference and will continue to make a difference.

Although we are generally meeting domestic and European air quality targets across much of Scotland, there are of course hotspots of poorer air quality in a number of urban areas. A range of actions takes place to address that.

Our cleaner air for Scotland strategy contains a distinctive set of actions that will improve air quality. The strategy also recognises that there are some shared actions that will help to improve air quality and to mitigate climate change. In Scotland, we have set more stringent air quality objectives for particulate matter than the rest of the UK and Europe. The Scottish Government will continue to work with our agencies—SEPA, Transport Scotland, Health Protection Scotland and others—to reduce further air pollution and its effects on human and environmental health, which members covered in the debate.

In partnership with the UK Government and the other Administrations, we are consulting on updated actions for the plan to secure compliance with EU air quality legislation. "Cleaner Air for Scotland" is our first national air quality strategy and sets out a vision of what Scotland could be in relation to air quality—we could be the best in Europe at tackling the issue, and of course there is the massive impact that we could have if we reduced health inequalities.

The action plan covers six objectives: transport, health, placemaking—many members have touched on planning—climate change, communications, and legislation and policy, the goal being to protect human health and natural environments and reduce health inequalities.

There are new initiatives that will help to take forward the plan. A national modelling framework will provide a standard air quality assessment methodology for use across Scotland at the regional and local scale. A national low emission framework will set out a procedure for local authorities and our agencies to determine effective measures that will address air quality issues at the local level. That does not need to be three years away—it can come sooner than that—but it has to be robust. The World Health Organization guideline values for particulate matter will be adopted into legislation, making Scotland the first country in Europe to do that. A national air quality awareness campaign will also be developed to inform key audiences and encourage behavioural change.

The framework in the action plan is comprehensive. Hanzala Malik asked what we are doing. I suggest that he looks at the strategy once again, which commits us to a range of actions. I think that he will see that there is that cross-

agency, cross-sector impetus to deliver change and improvement.

Hanzala Malik: I am aware of the strategy. I was asking what else the Government is doing—what new things—because we have been failing our EU limits.

Derek Mackay: To look at transport specifically—my own brief—there is a further move to a low-carbon economy, more electric vehicles, more charging points, and more incentives to encourage people to move to low-emission vehicles and electric vehicles. Of course, there is no controversy around electric vehicles because there are no fossil fuel emissions from the tail pipes of such vehicles.

There is also investment in the railways to encourage increasing patronage, and there is the electrification of the railways, which will further decarbonise public transport. There is also integrated transport to encourage more people out of their cars and into public transport as well as active travel.

We have the policy set in the national transport strategy, which I am currently refreshing, but by way of finance there is the Scottish green bus fund, which Jamie McGrigor referred to, and the switched on Scotland campaign to encourage a move to electric vehicles, which I have touched on. The move to electric vehicles felt quite futuristic, but there have probably been more sales in the past year than we have had in the past five years put together.

The Scottish Government now invests more than £1 billion per year on public transport and sustainable travel.

Sarah Boyack: Can I ask the minister to consider the issue of car clubs? We have had a car club in Edinburgh for 17-odd years and it has enabled a lot of people not to have to buy a car, as was mentioned by one of the minister's colleagues. It would be good to have easier access to better vehicles.

Derek Mackay: I think that we should do more on car clubs and a range of transport initiatives through incentives. We need to work together with the private sector, with employers thinking about it more clearly as well. Many car clubs are using electric vehicles because the journeys are short, so there is a win-win situation in respect of those schemes. I absolutely support them.

As regards the allocation to reduce the carbon impact of transport, the Scottish Government has allocated more than £200 million over 2012-13 to 2014-15 to reduce the carbon impact of transport through active travel, low-carbon vehicles and congestion reduction. We have allocated more than £300 million to support low-carbon transport

between 2013-14 and 2015-16. Compared with 2013-14, we have increased investment in active travel by more than 80 per cent—from £21.35 million in 2013-14 to £39.2 million in 2015-16. In the same period, our overall capital budget decreased by 26 per cent.

The Volkswagen scandal has undermined public confidence. We will work with the UK Government on the issue; we support the UK Government approach in advocating tougher real driving emission testing. I am happy to share a fuller definition of that with members.

Scotland has a wonderful natural environment. Of course we want that to be reflected in our air quality, and we want to take all the necessary actions at the national level and at the most local level to make the desired impact on tackling the environmental justice and health inequalities issues and to improve the overall prosperity of local communities. Clearly transport has a role to play, and I will ensure that, within my ministerial brief, we do everything that we can to realise the ambitions of the cleaner air for Scotland strategy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thank all the members for taking part in this important debate.

Meeting closed at 17:55.

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